

Ten killed in Algeria on eve of elections

ALGIERS (AP) — Ten people were found killed in western Algeria Monday, on the eve of elections which Algerians hope will pave the way for an end to the country's seven-year, bloody insurgency. The massacre was reported by Algerian Radio, but there was no immediate official confirmation. The bodies were found near Mascara, about 150 kilometres west of the capital. The area has been the scene of mounting violence in recent years, especially between Islamic militants and army troops. The campaign for Thursday's presidential elections was to end at midnight Monday (see story on page 12).

Pilot threatened angry passenger

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NATO says Yugoslavia bombing to continue until Milosevic gives in Nine killed, 16 wounded in attack on passenger train'

BRUSSELS (R) — NATO foreign ministers, keen to show unity, on Monday accused Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic of creating a massive humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo and said they would continue bombing until he gave in.

But Yugoslavia remained defiant, saying the attacks must stop and that even if they did it would not talk to NATO directly.

Yugoslav officials reported scores of casualties from a twentieth day of NATO attacks, with nine people killed and 16 wounded in a train hit by a missile and three more dying in an attack on a car near the Kosovo regional capital Pristina.

Meeting in Brussels, NATO's 19 ministers warned Milosevic not to harm some quarter of a million hungry, desperate ethnic Albanians who military commanders said were stranded in Kosovo.

Hundreds of thousands of others have fled to nearby states.

A NATO statement charged that Milosevic's government "has created a massive humanitarian catastrophe which also threatens to destabilise the surrounding region."

"Air strikes will be pursued until President Milosevic accedes to the demands of the international community," it said.

The alliance reiterated its demands: Yugoslavia must end all military action, withdraw its forces from Kosovo, let refugees return and allow an international force to oversee the peace.

"There can be no compromise whatsoever over NATO's war aims," British Prime Minister Tony Blair told a London news conference. "We have got to carry on until every one of our

objectives are secured in full."

U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen said intelligence reports pointed to "sinking morale" in the Yugoslav armed forces, with growing desertions and draft dodging.

But alliance leaders repeated that an invasion of Kosovo was not being contemplated.

Despite the tough talk, there were hints NATO might be softening its line on peace terms. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said NATO aimed to play a "core" role in an international peace force in Kosovo but was ready to share the mission with the United Nations or the OSCE.

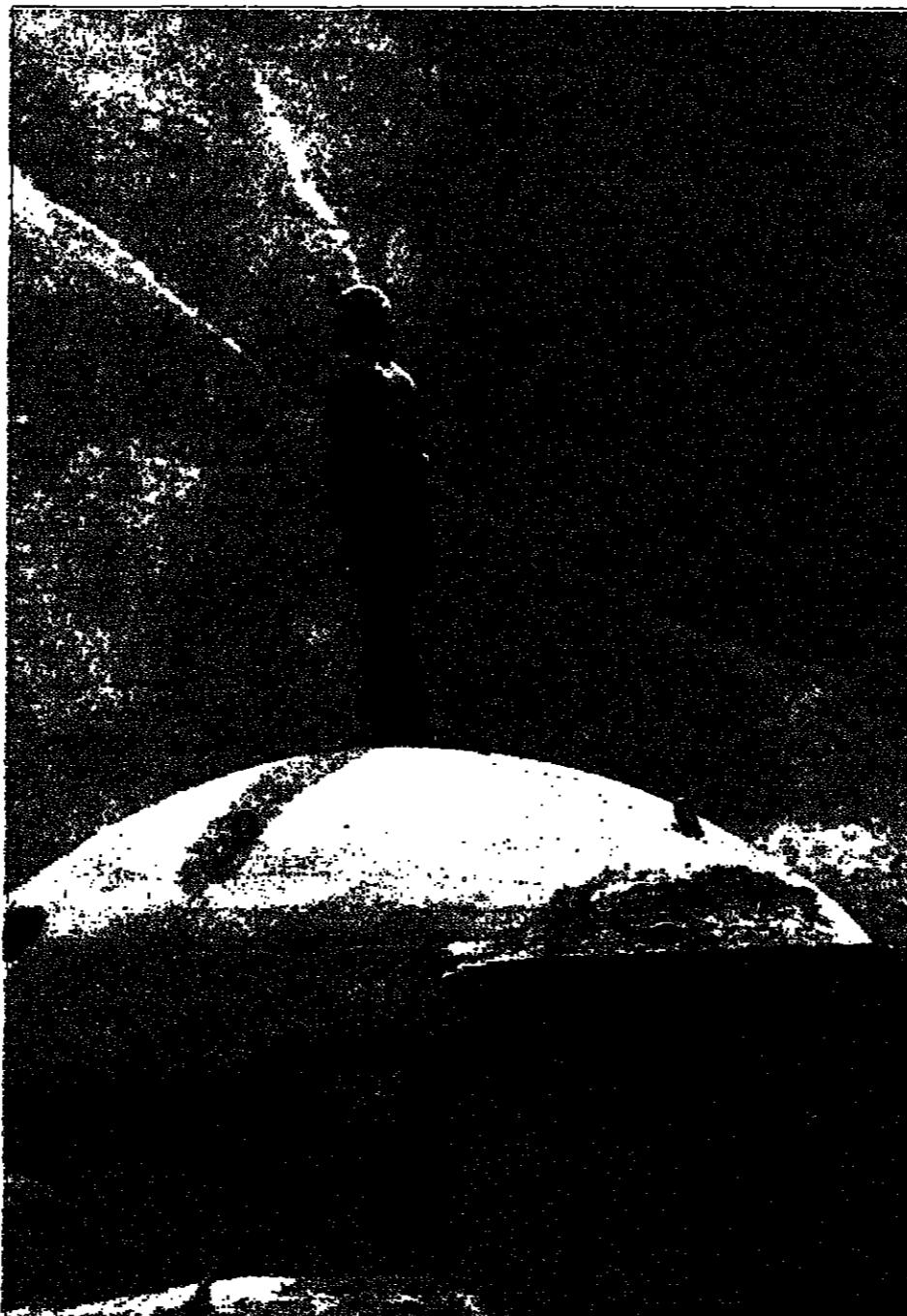
French Defence Minister Alain Richard said earlier the West could consider a peace force not under direct NATO leadership — and with Russian participation — as a "concession" to Yugoslavia, but added it would have to have clout.

Borislav Milosevic, the Yugoslav president's brother and Belgrade's ambassador to Russia, said Yugoslavia wanted a key role for Moscow in ending the conflict.

"Stop the bombings and then ways can be found of going back to the political process," he said, "but not with the aggressors, not with the now-defunct [six-power] Contact Group. Other mediation mechanisms can be found and we see Russia playing a very major role in this."

Yugoslav military and rescue officials said at least nine people were killed and 16 wounded when a NATO missile hit a train crossing over a bridge in southeastern Serbia, destroying two carriages.

(Continued on page 7)



An ethnic Albanian child from Kosovo who camped with his family in the outskirts of Kukes, northern Albania, stares on Monday at the mountains he came across from the top of one of the some 300,000 small bunkers that former Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha spread all over the country (AP photo)

'Former minister faces charges of sexual assault'

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — A former minister has been charged with rape by his Philippine domestic helper, who claimed that he assaulted her while she was under sedation, official sources said Monday.

The sources said the helper, in her thirties, filed an unprecedented suit against the former official accusing him of raping her at his residence on April 1.

The former minister is currently outside Jordan, but his relatives are trying to arrange an out-of-court settlement with the plaintiff, whose case is being followed by the Philippines embassy in Amman.

Contacted by the Jordan Times, the Philippines diplomatic mission here declined any comment on the ramifications of the case.

"We are not allowed to give any information," said the mission. "The case is now with the district attorney. It is now in the hands of the judicial system."

In her statement to police, the plaintiff charged that the former minister took advantage of his family's absence to sexually assault her.

Israeli army blocks attempted land grab by settlers

HEBRON (AFP) — Israeli settlers tried to occupy a hill near Hebron on Monday in an apparent bid to expand the Jewish enclave of Kiryat Arba, but they were ordered from the site by the army, officials said.

A dozen armed settlers arrived before dawn at the hill just 200 metres from the nearest Palestinian house by the northern entrance to Hebron, bringing with them tents and a water tank.

Israeli soldiers were quickly deployed to the area and prevented the group from putting up the tents and the cistern.

After lengthy discussions, the settlers agreed to leave the site and the army declared the area a closed military zone, Peter Lerner, an army spokesman, said.

Independent lawyers told the Jordan Times that the plaintiff's case is weak, since she will have to convince the court of the validity of her charges.

The plaintiff will be requested to explain "why she was able to recount the whole episode while she was under sedation."

Former ministers do not enjoy political immunity.

Guilty verdicts in cases of rape of a minor carry a maximum penalty of death; if the victim is an adult the sentence could be a few years' imprisonment with hard labour.

Lerner said the hill was "state land designated for Kiryat Arba" but that no approval had been given for the site's development.

Kiryat Arba is one of the biggest Jewish settlements in the West Bank, with more than 5,000 residents.

Meanwhile, the Israeli anti-settlement group Peace Now said it had discovered a new attempt by settlers to create an enclave a kilometre from the Jewish settlement of Har Bracha in the northern West Bank.

It said the settlers had erected two large tents, an electricity generator and lighting at the site, which was being guarded by armed youths.

"This is the second satellite settlement put up near Har Bracha" in recent weeks, the

group said in a press release.

The Bethlehem-based Applied Research Institute, which tracks Israeli settler activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, said settlers have seized 17 hills since Israel and the Palestinians signed the Wye River peace agreement in October 1998.

The land-grab attempt also

came as the United States was

stepping up its criticism of

settler activity in occupied Palestinian territory.

U.S. Secretary of State

Madeleine Albright and her

assistant, Martin Indyk, have

both told Israeli leaders in

recent days of Washington's

opposition to settlement

expansion.

The right-wing government

of Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu has broadly encouraged settlement activity since coming to power in 1996.

Netanyahu insists that the agreements Israel has signed with the Palestinians, which include commitments not to take unilateral actions, do not preclude building settlements.

The Palestinians, backed up by Washington, and European and other foreign states, argue that the settlement growth is designed to pre-judge territorial issues which should be tackled in negotiations on a final Israeli-Palestinian peace accord.

The Palestinians hope to create an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, areas occupied by Israel during the 1967 war.

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Slain general buried, army chief blames U.S.

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's political leaders joined thousands of mourners Monday for the funeral of a top general assassinated in an attack claimed by the opposition as the army's chief of staff blamed the United States for the slaying.

Iranian Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, parliamentary speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and other top officials were among thousands at the funeral of Brigadier General Ali Sayyad Shirazi, murdered Saturday outside his Tehran home.

President Mohammad Khatami was represented by his cabinet director Mohammad Ali Abtahi.

Shirazi's coffin, covered in flowers as well as the Iranian flag, was carried by soldiers before being passed along into the angry crowd.

Mourners struck themselves in the heads and chests as a sign of sorrow, and shouted slogans against the United States and the Iraq-based opposition People's Mujahedeen, which claimed the killing.

Khamenei, who is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces, recited prayers in memory of the officer, whom he had just promoted the week before.

Meanwhile, army Chief of Staff General Mohammad Firuz Abadi blamed Washington for the slaying.

in a speech at the services.

"The United States must know that the mercenary's bullets have deepened the Iranian people's hatred of the Great Satan," he said.

Abadi noted that the murder coincided with the anniversary of the rupture in diplomatic relations between Tehran and Washington on April 9, 1980, following the hostage-taking at the U.S. embassy here.

"This assassination has only further isolated the United States," he said, adding: "Let those Iranians in the dark know that the security of our society can only be guaranteed by the light of danger for the counter-revolutionaries," he said.

Politicians across the spectrum have denounced Shirazi's murder by the "hypocrites," the usual term of reference for the People's Mujahedeen, and the conservative English-language Tehran Times called Monday for armed retaliation.

Iranian forces should "immediately take the strongest action to pound and destroy all [People's] Mujahedeen bases in Iraq," it said, describing the group as a "cancerous tumour."

"Not only are the Mujahedeen terrorists... allowed to stay in the Western countries, but they are extended political, financial and moral support as well by the host countries."

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (C), Iran's supreme guide and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, attend the funeral of General Ali Sayyad Shirazi in Tehran on Monday (AFP photo)



'U.S. hopes to relaunch peace process after elections'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The United States wants to move the peace process forward quickly after Israeli general elections May 17, a senior U.S. official said here Sunday after meeting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"After the elections, it's certainly our hope and intention that we can move forward quickly," U.S. Assistant Secretary for the Middle East Martin Indyk said.

He said Washington wanted to see progress in the Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian peace tracks with Israel. The Palestinian-Israeli process has been marking time, while talks with Syria were frozen three years ago and with Lebanon five years ago.

"I am feeling that the window of the peacemaking is closing, and we have to find a way to move forward," he told reporters.

Indyk said the United States remains concerned about Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank, which has been encouraged by the Netanyahu government and criticised by the Palestinians.

Barak promises peace referendum if he wins

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli prime minister hopeful Ehud Barak, the frontrunner in a tight race, promised Sunday to hold a referendum on peace accords with the Palestinians and Syria if he wins the upcoming election.

"If I emerge the winner, I intend to proceed with a referendum in which the Israeli people will be called on to settle the issue of a final accord with the Palestinians and with Syria," the opposition Labour Party leader said on Channel Two television.

"In the next few days, I'm going to have a group of legal experts write the referendum proposal on peace accords with the Palestinians and Syria, which will be submitted to the Knesset 60 days after my government is formed," he said.

A recent poll showed that 45 per cent of Israeli voters would back Barak in a head-to-head run-off election against incumbent Benjamin Netanyahu who garnered 42 per cent of the poll.

State Madeleine Albright and Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon.

Albright had reiterated her opposition to the building of new Jewish settle-

ments in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

She said again that Washington opposed any unilateral proclamation of a Palestinian state.

Indyk also met Yitzhak Mordechai on Sunday in Jerusalem. The former Israeli defence minister is the centrist party candidate for prime minister.

Such a run-off, if required, would take place on June 1.

In the first round, scheduled for May 17, Netanyahu would win 36 per cent of the vote, according to the opinion poll, with Barak winning 35 per cent, underlining the closeness of the race.

Centrist candidate Yitzhak Mordechai would receive 14 per cent of the vote and far-right leader Benny Begin five per cent according to the same poll.

Ten per cent of the voters said they were undecided about whom to back in the first round.

The Oslo interim peace accords with the Palestinians expire May 4 after five years of autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

But negotiations on the final status of these territories have not proceeded beyond their opening stage.

The two sides do not agree on the final goal. The Palestinians want to set up their own state with Arab east Jerusalem as its capital.

While a Hamas activist in the Palestinian self-rule area has reportedly declared the movement's intention to join the leadership, Hamas official spokesman Ibrahim Ghosheh dismissed those remarks as merely a "personal opinion."

Al-Arab Al-Yawm daily on Monday quoted Hamas "official" Ismail Abu Shanab as saying the movement was keen on discussing ways of joining the PNA lead-

Hamas issues conflicting statements concerning links with the Palestinian state

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), a vehement opponent of peace with Israel, has given conflicting signals as to the prospects of joining ranks with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in the event of a forged Palestinian state.

While a Hamas activist in the Palestinian self-rule area has reportedly declared the movement's intention to join the leadership, Hamas official spokesman Ibrahim Ghosheh dismissed those remarks as merely a "personal opinion."

But the movement's Amman-based spokesman denied any intention of joining the PNA and cast doubt on the Palestinian leadership's credibility.

"Hamas believes that the PNA is an extension of the Oslo accords. And hence, there is no intention whatsoever to participate in this system," Ghosheh told the Jordan Times.

The movement, he added, also believes "that there are no practical conditions for the creation of a Palestinian state."

The Zionist (Israeli)

occupation still

lingers on "five years after the PLO and Israel struck the self-rule peace accords."

Ghosheh argued that Abu Shanab's remarks "do not reflect the policy of Hamas but rather his own personal opinion."

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has been adamant on declaring an independent Palestinian state on May 4, the deadline for the expiry of the five-year interim accords.

But he has been under world pressure, especially by the United States and Europe, to postpone the scheduled declaration till after the Israeli elections, slated for May 17.

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:00 ... Aqaba (add) (RJ)
07:50 ... Amsterdam, New York (RJ)

11:10 ... Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:15 ... Berlin (add) (RJ)

11:25 ... Geneva, Paris (RJ)

11:55 ... Brussels (RJ)

12:15 ... Cairo (RJ)

13:05 ... London (RJ)

13:45 ... Madrid (RJ)

19:35 ... Beirut (RJ)

20:20 ... Jeddah (RJ)

20:40 ... Damascus (RJ)

21:00 ... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

23:59 ... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

03:00 ... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

12:30 ... Riyadh (SV)

13:10 ... Abu Dhabi, Doha (CF)

17:45 ... Tel Aviv (LY)

17:45 ... Beirut (ME)

18:00 ... Dubai, Damascus (EK)

18:10 ... Paris (AF)

19:00 ... Sanaa (Y)

20:40 ... Amsterdam (KL)

23:25 ... Lamaca (CY)

23:59 ... Bucharest (RO)

20:00 ... Beirut, Sanaa (LY)

23:40 ... Beirut, Amsterdam (ME)

00:25 ... Bucharest (RO)

02:00 ... Milan (AZ)

03:20 ... Istanbul (TK)

05:35 ... Lamaca (CY)

05:55 ... Damascus, London (BA)

06:25 ... Paris (AP)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

07:25 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marks Airport) (RW)

18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)15200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700).

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Information on other flights

Home News



Prince Hamzah conveys Easter greetings to clergy, meets with interior minister

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hamzah, the Regent, on Sunday conveyed Easter greetings and good wishes to Jordan's Christian communities from His Majesty King Abdullah.

The Regent said during his visit to Christian leaders gathered at the Episcopal Evangelical head office in Amman: "We are following in the footsteps of the late King Hussein in our policy regarding all citizens and communities in Jordan which form a united family."

Bishop Riyah Abul Asal, head of the Episcopal Evangelical Church, delivered an address expressing gratitude and appreciation of the Jordanian leadership's concern and care for Christian communities. He said the visit exemplifies the close ties that bind the leadership to all Jordanians. He expressed the Christian communities' allegiance to the Hashemite leadership and conveyed best wishes to King Abdullah and the Crown Prince. He said their efforts to maintain and strengthen Jordan's relations with the Arab World were appreciated by all.

Abul Asal expressed the Christians' hope for a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

Accompanying the Regent on the visit were Acting Prime Minister Marwan Hmoud, Lower House Deputy Bassam Haddadin, Chief Islamic Justice Sheikh Izzeddine Al Khatib Al Tamimi, Minister

of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi, Minister of Finance Michel Marto and other members of Parliament and senate and prominent Christian community figures.

During a meeting at the Ministry of Interior on Monday, the Regent said Jordan has overcome the difficulties that faced the country following the passing away of His Majesty King Hussein. He said Jordan will achieve its aspirations and ambitions by rallying behind the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah.

The Regent, who met Minister of Interior Nayeef Qadi, governors and senior ministry officials, said Jordan will not allow anyone to interfere in its internal affairs nor to influence its march.

Prince Hamzah called on all Jordanians to exert every effort to achieve Jordan's goals and enhance its march.

Qadi briefed the Crown Prince on his ministry's strategy, which focuses on providing comprehensive security.

The Regent and Qadi visited the Public Security Department (PSD), where Prince Hamzah was received by its Director Lt. Gen Nasouh Muhibedin. The director briefed him on the PSD's structural organisation and its duties. Prince Hamzah also visited the Civil Defence Department (CDD) where he was briefed by its director, Lt. Gen. Theeb Al Maani, on the department's services to citizens.

Prince Hassan urges greater cooperation among Muslim cultural institutions

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Prince Hassan on Monday stressed to a conference of Islamic scholars the need for cooperation among Muslim cultural institutions to present the true image of Islam.

In an address to the International Congress on Learning and Education in the Ottoman World in Istanbul, Prince Hassan highlighted the important role the Ottoman Empire played towards cultural progress and development.

"The Ottomans built a house that sheltered many peoples and faiths, languages and ethnic origins," he said.

He also added that despite the difficult circumstances presented by the rise of "ultra-nationalism" that brought on the Great Arab Revolt, Jordan "never lost sight of the need to start again with our shared common ground, respect, understanding and interdependence."

The conference was organised by the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

- "Wild Strawberries" at Abdul Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:30 p.m.
- German film "Spur der Steine" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman on Wednesday, April 14 at 7:30 p.m.
- "Phenomenon" at Books@Cafe, Jabal Amman at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 5650458)
- "First Knight" at the British Council, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m. (Children's film "The Magic of the Faraway Tree" will be screened on Wednesday, April 14 at 5:00 p.m.).

LECTURE

- Lecture about the work of Jordanian ceramist Mahmoud Taha by art critic Abdul Raouf Shoman at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:00 p.m.

AMMAN THEATRE FESTIVAL

- Making Cartoon With Children" by Erling Ericksson at the Hayy Nazzal Development Centre, daily until April 14 (2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.).
- Palestinian play "the Glass Caff" at Osama Machini Theatre at 6:00 p.m. Egyptian play "The Last Trip," Iraqi Play "Sidra" and Jordanian play "Shahazad's Dreams On Her Wedding Night" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 6:00 p.m., 8:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m., and 9:00 p.m. respectively.

EXHIBITIONS

- Hand-painted ostrich eggs depicting wild animals of Jordan at the Jordan River Design (Tel. 5337931/2), until April 13.
- Plastic art exhibition by Hussein Da'ssa entitled "Horizons of the Nineties" at Orient Gallery, Shmeisani, until April 20 (Tel. 56813034).
- Works by Jordanian ceramist Mahmoud Taha at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until May 6. Also showing an exhibition of photographs by Jordanian artist Adnan Sharif entitled "Spring at Darat Al Funun," until May 6.
- Works by Jordanian artist Shereen Audi Kurdi at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until April 28.
- Display of Iraq Al Amir collection at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation until April 29 (Tel. 5699141/2). (The exhibition includes handicraft, pottery, handwoven fabrics, cushions, handmade paper, and food).
- "Amman... A Meeting Point" by Swedish artists Ann Edholm and Hakan Rhenberg at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 22.

JPA, Al Arab Al Yawm hurl insults in tug-of-war over fired employees

By Alia Shakri Hamzeh

AMMAN — Seventeen employees of Al Arab Al Yawm daily newspaper who were sacked last week are entangled in a tug-of-war between the paper's board of directors, chaired by Riyad Hroub, and the council of Jordan Press Association (JPA) now on the threshold of presidential campaigns.

The JPA council blasted the paper for firing the employees last Thursday.

said the daily's arguments as presented by General Manager Adnan Husseini — that the dismissals were necessary for "internal restructuring," and fell within an article of the Labour Law — were unconvincing.

The council then demanded a meeting with Hroub to persuade him to reconsider the dismissals, and threatened further measures, including legal action and organised sit-ins if he failed to respond.

However, the meeting between JPA President Seif Sherif, who is a candidate in JPA elections later this month, and Hroub reached a dead end on Saturday, after which the council issued a statement calling for the daily's employees

and JPA members to stage a one-day strike on Monday in front of Al Arab Al Yawm's building.

"The council calls on all its fellow journalists and members of the [JPA's] general assembly to abide by its decision and take part in the strike, in a bid to help all those who lost their jobs. Those who refrain from participating will be under scrutiny," the statement said.

The council had also called for a general meeting with the daily's employees to discuss ways to solve the issue, and brief those sacked on the earlier meeting with Hroub.

On Sunday, however, the council retracted its plan to strike, saying an immediate strike was illegal under the Labour Law, and required a 14-day announcement.

Instead, arrangements for an "open sit-in" on Tuesday morning were made by the JPA after it obtained permission from Amman's mayor, said JPA Deputy President Tareq Momani.

On Monday Al Arab Al Yawm issued a counterattack and accused the JPA council of instigating mutiny. It also said that the association's recent interest in the cause of those sacked was "in the first

place for presidential campaign propaganda and lastly for the sake of those who lost their jobs."

It then ridiculed the JPA for cancelling its Monday one-day strike after it had "warned the council of the illegality of such an action under the Press and Publications Law (PPD)." Al Arab Al Yawm said the council would have been liable for legal action and a JD5,000-10,000 fine if it had gone through with the strike.

"The retracted decision, which is a victory for all the staff of the paper who bonded in support for their institution against the orchestrated battle by the JPA and other sides, and aimed at putting Al Arab Al Yawm off the market," the daily printed on Monday.

Dismissing accusations by Al Arab Al Yawm, Sherif issued a statement on Monday evening saying the association strongly denies its action against the daily was part of the elections campaign, or aimed at shutting down the paper.

It also said the JPA has not retracted and will not retract its demands that all dismissed employees be allowed to return. Sharif said the strike was postponed because lawyers

advised the action as a last resort, adding that their actions "were purely professional and for the rights of those fired."

He called on all members to abide by the JPA's decisions and participate in its measures against the daily for the sole interest of those who were fired.

Momani reiterated Sherif's statement saying "that this was not an individual case. Rather, it includes everybody, and the JPA's actions were aimed to teach all media institutions not to resort to similar measures against its employees.

He said the council was considering legal action against Hroub for defamation.

According to a senior source at the paper, the board had met with the rest of the employees, who in turn seemed worried that they too might get the boot.

The remaining employees attempted a handful of strikes, demanding that their colleagues be returned and that all employees be given annual contracts.

The attempts were subdued after the board explained that "only those who proved to be incompetent and unproductive were

sacked," and gave assurances that "no one else would be fired," said the source, who requested anonymity.

He explained that the dismissal of the 17 was legal and that the Ministry of Labour, following a request from the daily, advised its board that it legally could dismiss up to 60 of their employees within the parameters of the Labour Law. "Less than a third of that number were dismissed," he told the Jordan Times.

This is not the first tussle over employment by the paper. Last December Hroub sacked around 16 of the daily's non-editorial employees, and in February he sacked the chief editor, Saleh Qallab, and the responsible editor, Taher Adwan.

The paper went to press on Monday, publishing assurances from Hroub not to relinquish more employees saying the restructuring phase is over, and that the paper will witness a qualitative leap in all aspects, including for employees.

Hroub owns shares in Al Arab Al Yawm, Al Misaiyah, the Arab Daily, and in weeklies Shihan, Al Bilad, Abed Rabbo and Hawadeth Al Sa'ah.

Thespians find 'boring and hideous scene' in associations' boycott of theatre festival

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — Al Fawanees Theatre Group, organiser of the 6th Amman International Theatre Festival, issued a statement on Monday in response to a boycott of the festival launched by the "anti-normalisation committee" of Jordan's 13 professional associations.

The committee on Saturday called for the boycott on grounds that the festival was "financed by foreign sources and that foreign groups participated in it."

Al Fawanees clearly implicated the Jordanian Artists Association as the perpetrator of the boycott and said that "the association is exploiting its disputes with the festival to publicise such allegations on behalf of the anti-normalisation committee."

Al Fawanees has often

Do we pay those who stayed in their country by boycotting them and shutting doors?

— Al Fawanees

been attacked by the board of the Artists Association for procuring funds from "suspicious" foreign organisations and for "normalising" ties with Israel by inviting theatre groups whose members are Arab

Israelis.

Al Fawanees dismissed the allegations in its statement, saying that the attitude of Arab Israelis against Israel's occupation [of Palestinian lands] is well-known. It called the allegations "pitiful."

Palestinian actors participating in the festival were angered by the boycott.

George Ibrahim, member of Al Qasaba Theatre Group from Jerusalem, stressed that the group represents Palestine, regardless of the passports held by its members.

"We represent Palestine wherever we go, and we are officially sent by the Palestinian Ministry of Culture," he said. "We were also awarded the Palestine Prize for Theatre, which was presented to us by Yasser Arafat."

Allegations of the same nature were also made in

last year's festival, targeting mainly the members of Al Qasaba.

Al Qasaba participated in the Amman Theatre Festival organised by the Artists Association in December, but no complaints were made at the time....

Raed Ghazaleh, a member of Inad Group from Palestine, shared the same sentiments with Ibrahim and stressed that Arab Israelis are struggling to maintain their identity as Palestinians.

"They are Palestinians regardless of the documents that they are forced to hold," she said. "They are the ones who refused to leave their land. We should not humiliate them."

The same view was expressed in the statement, which reads, "Do we pay those who stayed in their country by boycotting them and shutting doors?"

As for the issue of funding, Al Fawanees said it receives aid from organisations such as the American Ford Foundation and the Swedish Sida Organisation. The statement stressed that such organisations "are not suspicious and their funds are not conditional."

However, the statement called on those who have evidence in support of their allegations to step forward and prove them.

Finally, the statement concluded by saying that the boycott is a "boring and hideous scene," and that Al Fawanees hopes for a "more lively" atmosphere at the 7th Theatre Festival next year.

There are three Palestinian groups participating in this year's festival: Al Qasaba, Theatre Day and Al Bayader.

Jordan's museum curators:

Women of exceptional taste in more ways than one

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — A Fulbright senior scholar, researching museums and art in the Middle East in order to publish a book on the issue, on Saturday stressed the importance of women pioneers who helped shape cultural institutions in Jordan.

In a lecture entitled "Museums and Art in Jordan: A Personal Journey," organised by the Binational Fulbright Commission in Jordan and held at the Darat Al Funun, scholar Carol Malt said she learned that more women work as administrators and curators in the Middle East than in both America and Europe, a finding that piqued her interest.

As a retired museum director myself, and as a writer, I wanted to combine the things that I like. I have always been interested in the Middle East and its art, and as a woman and former museum director, I am interested in women's role in the arts," she said.

There are 32 operating museums and eight in the development stage in Jordan: 16 museums fall under the archaeology and antiquities division

while seven exhibit folklore. Only two museums feature contemporary art.

According to Malt, Jordanians perceive museums as a place to "recover a sense of belonging to local history and traditions" and a place for old things that "show the past and items we don't use anymore."

As most of the museum's audiences are tourists, the role of museums as a major tourist asset and revenue source was realised by museum curators and administrators.

Malt said the basic professional needs of Jordanian museums are similar those of American ones: funding, technology, and training.

I wanted to find out the women's involvement, why they chose museum work, their accomplishments, positions they hold or aspire to, their training, their influence in planning or decision-making, their status in the museum work, and their future goals," she told the audience.

Malt found that many women working in museums needed help in museological training, procuring books and

practical advice. Furthermore, they expressed a need for technology, computers and software.

Most women interviewed varied in age, but typically were married and held a bachelors degree in archaeology from the University of Jordan, or degrees in law, art, or political science. Many began their involvement in this field to the extent that she takes honey with her when she travels. Another keeps an ostrich and a peacock in the garden; one collects stones; one likes burnt food; one collects miniatures and doll houses, one makes puppets and gives puppet shows, and one collects costumes.

Some women pioneers in the arts sector in Jordan were mentioned in Malt's speech: HRH Princess Wijdan Ali, who founded the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, Suha Shoman, founder of Darat Al Funun, Hadeel Abaza, who founded the Folklore Museum, Saadia Al Tell, founder of the Jordan Museum of Popular Tradition, Aida Naghawi, who founded the Islamic Museum, and Nazimah Rida, founder of the King Abdullah Museum in Ma'an.

Many other women deserved credit for their participation in the development of art

and cultural institutions in Jordan, she added, such as collector Widad Kawar, arts activist Hind Nasser, arts educator Samia Zaru, art dealer Nuhu Batshon, and artist and teacher Fahrelnissa Zeid.

Malt said that much more could be done to encourage Jordanians to visit museums.

"Museums are such a resource here, especially for young people," Malt told the Jordan Times following the lecture. She added that although the national curriculum included museum visits, this wasn't always implemented.

Malt also said that she "would like to see more contemporary art museums and galleries. The private sector should take over and develop that sector."

Asked for her opinion regarding the role of women played in the arts sector in Jordan, Malt said that she hadn't come to any conclusion about that, yet. Most answers she had received about that matter were "women are better at this kind of thing than men."

Four die in German monorail plunge

WUPPERTAL, Germany (R) — Four people died and 50 others were injured on Monday when a German monorail train packed with commuters fell from its suspension rail and plunged 10 metres into a river.

State prosecutors suspected the accident may have been caused by maintenance work being carried out on the historic Schwebebahn, or hanging railway, which opened in the Ruhr Valley town of Wuppertal almost a century ago. An inquiry was launched.

The incident came less than a year after Germany's worst ever rail disaster, when 101 died near the northern town of Eschede as a high-speed Inter-City Express (ICE), flagship of the Deutsche Bahn state network, flew off the tracks.

Bystanders in Wuppertal said they heard a loud bang as the blue and orange locomotive and its two carriages broke free of the overhead monorail and crashed through a large hot water pipe directly below the track, plunging into the

river.

"There was a bang. Boom. I looked around for a car crash but saw nothing," said Hassan Akcasu, who said the accident happened around 5:45 a.m. (0345 GMT).

"Then I heard people in the train screaming, trying to smash open the windows."

Helicopters carried the worst casualties to hospital.

Police said rescue was hindered because the river was some four metres below the street level embankment.

Two bodies were recovered at the scene and one passenger died in hospital. A fourth body, that of a woman, was only later recovered, some 500 metres downstream.

The distinctive Schwebebahn snakes its way through the busy industrial Ruhr conurbation, following the River Wupper. It has become a curio for tourists but remains mainly used for commuter traffic.

Officials said 54 people were aboard at the time.

Germans' confidence in their extensive and heavily used railway system, at the heart of the European net-

work, was rocked by the Eschede disaster, which was caused by a faulty wheel.

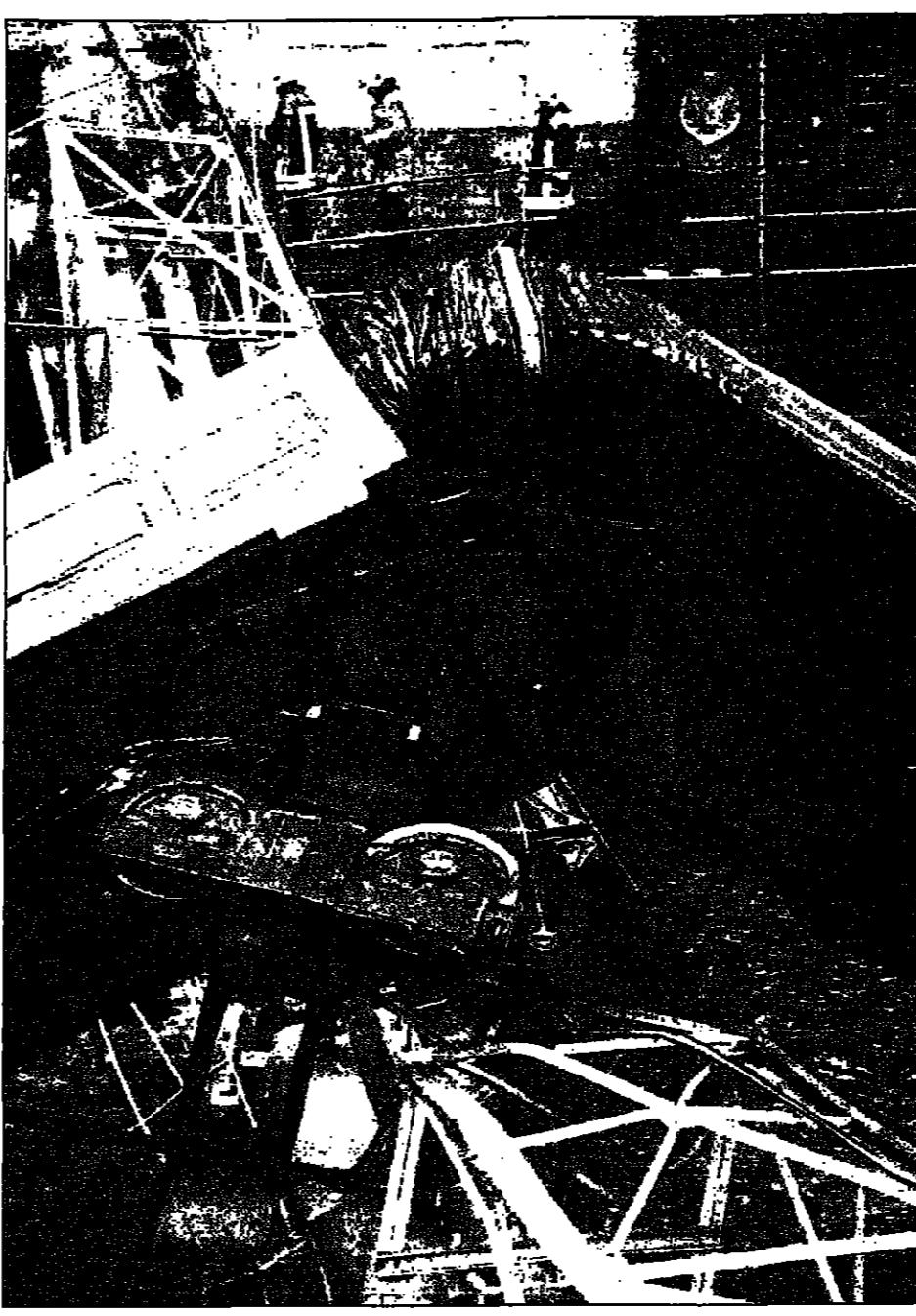
A number of other minor accidents have claimed lives in recent months, prompting trade unions to accuse managers of cutting back on jobs and safety spending to prepare for privatisation, which the government plans by 2002.

The Schwebebahn was opened in 1901 and has one of the best safety records of any line in Germany.

Police said a hook left on the line after weekend maintenance work, part of a major long-term overhaul, could have caused the locomotive to buck free of the rail.

"The hook is certainly a clue at least," said police spokesman Juergen Bremme. "That had no business being there."

Only a handful other incidents have been recorded on the line. In 1950, a circus elephant called Tuffie was riding the Schwebebahn for a publicity stunt when it unexpectedly leaped free into the river below. The animal was unharmed.



Three firemen stand at the wreck of a monorail train which fell 10 metres into the River Wupper in the town of Wuppertal north of Cologne April 12 (Reuters photo)

Russia supports alliance with Yugoslavia, but not immediately

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia favours the idea of incorporating Yugoslavia into an alliance that already includes Russia and Belarus, but membership can't be granted instantaneously, the foreign minister said on Monday.

Yugoslavia's federal parliament voted Monday to join the Slavic Union, apparently with an eye towards receiving military help from Russia and Belarus to stop NATO strikes against Yugoslavia.

Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic requested membership in a letter to Russian President Boris Yeltsin that was delivered to the Russian foreign ministry on Sunday.

"Moscow positively regards the idea of Yugoslavia's membership in the union of Russia and Belarus, and corresponding orders have been given to study this issue," Russian told reporters Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov Monday.

But Ivanov and other Russian officials have cautioned Yugoslavia that membership can't be granted quickly. Ivanov said last week that NATO operations against Yugoslavia were likely to be over before the country could be included in an expanded union.

command said.

The idea of a union between Russia, Belarus and Yugoslavia is popular among many politicians in Russia, though some, including president Boris Yeltsin, have said that now is not the best time to consider it.

The notion of a Slavic union is particularly popular among Russian Communists, who regret the breakup of the Soviet Union.

However, liberals have warned that Russia should be wary of aligning itself with Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Lukashenko is a big supporter of the union treaty, and wants to unite his country with Russia.

Also on Monday, a convoy of Russian trucks carrying aid to Yugoslavia was allowed to pass through Hungary, after Moscow threatened a strong response if the matter wasn't quickly resolved.

Hungary stopped the convoy Sunday after identifying five trucks as military vehicles.

Hungarian officials said the five armoured vehicles in the convoy violated the international arms embargo on Yugoslavia.

Hungary allowed the convoy — minus the armoured vehicles — to proceed Monday.

Russian navy command said Monday that no additional Russian warships have followed the lone intelligence ship that has been sent to the Adriatic.

Several Russian warships in the Black Sea fleet ships were on standby and ready to sail, but no order has been given to send them, the navy

Blair launches 4-pronged election campaign

LONDON (R) — British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Monday launched his Labour Party on a four-pronged campaign for elections in local government, Scotland, Wales and Europe in the next two months.

Together the polls will give a sweeping verdict on his government's first real test after two years in power.

Blair told Labour candidates to fight on the government's record — an extra 40 billion pounds (\$65 billion) earmarked for health and education, a minimum wage, a halving of youth unemployment, lower tax and interest rates and the biggest increase ever in child benefit.

"New Labour is establishing itself as the party of economic competence in Britain today," he told a news conference.

With Labour defending landslide local government gains four years ago and with a new proportional voting system in place for the European parliament, the party admits it is bound to lose seats.

Deputy Prime Minister

John Prescott said that in local elections in 1995 Labour gained 2,000 seats and won control of 42 local councils, 24 of which had never previously been in Labour hands.

"We know it is going to be tough to repeat that performance," he said.

One Labour official said the party could lose as many as 1,000 seats. The party will do its best to massage down expectations ahead of the vote but the opposition conservatives have set themselves a target of a net gain of 800 seats.

The official said the traditionally low turnout for local elections would also hurt Labour. The litmus test would be how well the Conservatives did in southern England, their traditional heartland.

Voting for local councils will take place on May 6, the same day as elections for the first Scottish parliament in 300 years and for a devolved assembly in Wales. Elections to the European parliament are due a month later.

Labour's main challenge

is to win a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament and approval by Russia's two highest courts.

Yeltsin, meanwhile,

spoke with the speaker of parliament, Gennady Zyuganov, and said the impeachment issue should be debated now or dropped altogether, the presidential press service said.

Yeltsin's supporters

Yeltsin says impeachment debate should take place now or never

MOSCOW (AP) — President Boris Yeltsin said a looming impeachment debate should take place soon as scheduled or be dropped completely, the Kremlin said Monday.

Parliament's lower house is tentatively scheduled to begin the impeachment debate Thursday, but lawmakers are still discussing the possibility of postponing it.

Leaders of the various factions were meeting Monday to decide how to proceed.

Yeltsin, meanwhile, spoke with the speaker of parliament, Gennady Zyuganov, and said the impeachment issue should be debated now or dropped altogether, the presidential press service said.

The impeachment

motion is considered unlikely to succeed, but Yeltsin's frequent illnesses and the nation's economic crisis have weakened his authority and made his ouster more likely than it once was.

The motion must win a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament and approval by Russia's two highest courts.

A Duma panel has charged Yeltsin with instigating the 1991 Soviet collapse, improperly using force against hard-line lawmakers in 1993, launching the botched war in Chechnya, bringing the nation's military to ruin and waging genocide against the Russian people by pursuing economic policies that impoverished the country.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Accord signed on return of Congolese refugees

KINSHASA (AFP) — Congolese refugees settled across the Congo river in Bas-Congo province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) may return home with U.N. help. The ACP news agency reported here Monday. DRC Health Minister Mashako Mamba, his welfare counterpart from Congo, Leon Alfred Opimba, and the regional delegate of the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Darious Bayandor, signed a voluntary repatriation pact after a three-day working session, the official news agency said. They agreed that "at present and while waiting for the appropriate conditions for organised and assisted repatriation are met, the UNHCR will facilitate the return of any refugee who expresses the desire to go home in full knowledge of the circumstances". ACP added. Tens of thousands of Congolese fled into neighbouring DRC last December because of heavy fighting between the troops of President Denis Sassou Nguesso and ex-Prime Minister Bernard Kolelas, who was ousted with then president Pascal Lissouba in a 1997 civil war. The terms of "facilitation" of the spontaneous and voluntary return of refugees were decided by a tripartite commission, and UNHCR assistance will be limited to transport and resettlement, the agency said.

Army searches for FARC leader linked to executions of U.S. nationals

BOGOTA (AFP) — The Colombian Armed Forces has dispatched an elite squad to the northeast of the country to track down leftist rebel leader German Briceno, according to army sources. The squad, comprising members of the army, navy and air force, is scouring the area on the Venezuelan border for the guerrilla leader from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a spokesman for the Army's 18th brigade told radio stations Sunday. Colombian authorities believe Briceno, who also goes by the alias Grannobles, is responsible for the murder of three U.S. activists in March. The three, Terence Freitas, 24, Laelene Gay, 39, and Ingrid Washinawatok, 41, who were working with Andean natives, were kidnapped by FARC rebels on Feb. 25. Their bodies, riddled with bullets and bearing signs of torture, were found March 4 just inside Venezuela's border with Colombia. The FARC insists that the murders were a "grave mistake" and has pledged to punish a lower-ranking officer for the atrocity. FARC chief Manuel Marulanda said Friday he would announce the sentence to be handed down to Commander Gildardo in the next two months. But Colombia's military high command and U.S. authorities insist that Grannobles, brother of the second-highest ranking FARC commander, is responsible for the brutal murders. Washington, which called on Bogota to arrest and extradite the culprits to the United States, suspended peace contacts with the insurgents that it established in Costa Rica in December 1998 in the wake of the crime. The FARC leadership has steadfastly refused to hand over the culprits, saying they will be dealt with by revolutionary justice.

China develops first software to clamp down on Internet porn

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese technicians have developed the country's first software programme to clamp down on increasing pornography on the Internet, the People's Daily said Monday. The programme, developed by researchers at Qinghua University, uses artificial intelligence technology to analyse data being downloaded off the Internet as well as on CD-roms or floppy discs. It can detect pornographic texts in both English and Chinese, and if anything suspect is found the programme automatically shuts down the computer. Once installed, the programme can only be removed by using a password. Researchers are now working on a programme which can detect pornographic pictures which carry no text content, the Chinese-language daily said. It did not specify whether the programme was to go on general sale, but said it came as experts believed children could be exposed to pornographic web sites, with Internet use becoming more widespread in the country. After months of delay, China has begun moves to speed up development of the Internet, but without renouncing its control over content to screen out politically sensitive material. Providers of Internet services in China have grown rapidly in recent months and the known number of users doubled last year to reach 2.1 million in December. Official forecasts predict more than four million users by the end of the year and 10 million in 2002.

Malaysian anti-smuggling unit seizes 2,400 snakes

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — A Malaysian anti-smuggling unit seized about 2,400 snakes worth about \$20,000 from a truck near the Malaysia-Thailand border, a news report said Monday. Police spokesman Mohd Yusoff Disa said the unit acting on a tipoff, waylaid the truck and found the serpents in 400 boxes. A 28-year-old man was detained while another, believed to be the driver, fled, the national news agency Bernama said. The reptiles were believed to have been smuggled in from a neighbouring country for export to third countries like China, Singapore and Hong Kong, the spokesman said. The flesh of snakes is considered by some to be a rejuvenator. Some men consider their flesh to be an aphrodisiac. The authorities, however, consider the smuggling of snakes a crime, as some species are protected by law.

S. African photographer stabbed to death in his home

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — Acclaimed South African sport and news photographer John Rubynson was stabbed to death by an intruder in his Cape Town home early on Monday, police said. Rubynson, 58, was confronted by a man with a knife after he heard a noise in the house in the early hours of the morning and went to investigate, police spokesman Captain Mark Rombough said. He was calling to his girlfriend, Melanie Jonkers, to telephone the police when the intruder stabbed him in the chest. He was rushed to a nearby hospital where he died. Rubynson, who emigrated to South Africa from Britain in the 1970s, became one of the first photographers in the country to be hired by French photographic agency Sygma. He was chief photographer at the local Cape Times newspaper from 1979 to 1984 before moving on to cover several wars in Africa and further afield, including the conflict in Afghanistan. Rubynson sold many of his war images to international news agencies, television producer and colleague Rashied Lombard said. He won several South African awards for his sports photography. Last year he joined an independent television channel as a news producer. He also ran an agency in Cape Town during the apartheid years that trained young black photographers. Rubynson's colleagues Monday expressed their shock at his death. "We are very upset by this. It is a terrible thing to happen to anybody. He did not deserve this," Cape Town photographer and former World Press competition judge George Hallett said. Rubynson leaves a three-month-old baby daughter, Marie-Helene.

World News



Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (second right) is greeted by a young boy while his wife Siti Hasmah Ali (second left) and hospital staffs look on as he leaves the hospital in Kuala Lumpur (Reuters photo)

Malaysian PM released from hospital

KUALA LUMPUR (AP) — Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was discharged on Monday after a 10-day hospital stay for a severe lung infection. Malaysia's government news agency reported.

The 73-year-old leader was admitted to the national heart institute on April 2 with a serious case of bronchitis. He had not been seen by the public until Friday, when he appeared on national television still weak and pale, saying he hoped to return to work soon.

The Bernama news agency gave few details on his release, except that doctors advised Mahathir to rest at home before resuming work.

Just before his discharge, Mahathir was paid a half-hour visit by Malaysian King Tuanku Ja'afar, during which he looked "cheerful," Bernama reported.

"I am not allowed to receive visitors until I have recovered fully," Mahathir told Bernama, mentioning his appreciation for the doctors and staff "who have treated me

so well." He said that he had been free of a fever from a viral infection for the last three days and was undergoing physiotherapy.

Aides said Mahathir, who underwent triple bypass surgery in 1989, was hospitalised at the heart institute because his doctors and medical records are there. His seclusion had fuelled speculation that his condition was more serious than reported.

Mahathir, Asia's longest serving ruler, usually leads a hectic schedule and his illness has raised concern

ahead of a general election scheduled for April 2000.

There was speculation that his doctors may have wanted to keep him secluded during what is expected to be an intense week in the southeast Asian nation's capital.

A high court judge is expected to give his verdict on Wednesday in the sensational corruption trial of Anwar Ibrahim, whom Mahathir sacked as his deputy in September. Opposition groups have planned demonstrations and the mood in the capital is tense.

Total of 23 skeletons found in Tamil city

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) — Seven more skeletons have been found in a sewage pit in a sports stadium in the northern Tamil city of Jaffna, raising to 23 the number of human remains discovered in the last week, officials said Monday.

The excavation at the Durayappa stadium in Jaffna, 300 kilometres north of Colombo, began last week after municipal workers noticed a few bones when cleaning the pit.

In the first three days, 16

skeletons were recovered, and seven more were found over the weekend, said an official on condition of anonymity.

Government officials have declined to comment on skeletons, beyond saying they were being brought to Colombo for investigation.

The startling discovery came amidst preparations to exhume an alleged mass grave at Chenmani, about 10 kilometres from the stadium, where a convicted soldier testified in court that he had helped bury more than 400

bodies of people killed in custody.

The Chenmani excavation will start June 16, nearly a year after the soldier levelled the charges against the military. He was convicted of raping and murdering a Tamil girl.

Relatives of missing people have claimed more than 600 persons were taken away by the military after the city was captured from Tamil rebels in 1996. The battle for Jaffna was one of the bloodiest in the 16-year ethnic war that is still

under way.

Major General Lohan Gunawardene said recently only 300 complaints have been lodged about missing persons, and most of them apparently fled Jaffna and could be living in rebel-held territory.

Tamil rebels are waging a separatist campaign, saying Tamils are discriminated against by the Sinhalese majority. Tamils make up 18 per cent of the country's 18 million people and the Sinhalese are 76 per cent.

Vajpayee was accompanied by L.K. Advani, the minister responsible for law and order, and P. Kumaramangalam, who orchestrates the government's business in parliament.

Narayanan is a ceremonial figurehead, but he will play an important role in case the Vajpayee government loses its majority in parliament and falls. Narayanan will be required to assess various claimants to power.

The Vajpayee govern-

ment could face a vote of confidence as early as this week.

Kumaramangalam said earlier the government is banking on a large number of abstentions for its survival if it is put to a test of confidence.

A spokesman said Vajpayee and his top ministers briefed President K.R. Narayanan on the political situation, and claimed the government had the backing to survive the threat. "We have the majority. We will prove it when it is required," M. Venkai Naidu.

Vajpayee was accompanied by L.K. Advani, the minister responsible for law and order, and P. Kumaramangalam, who orchestrates the government's business in parliament.

"No vote in parliament is sterile. It is connected to the overall situation whether lawmakers are willing to risk another government," said Kumaramangalam. "The government will be relying heavily on abstentions," he told reporters.

A large regional party from south India has threatened to withdraw

from the ruling coalition, which could precipitate its collapse after parliament reconvenes on Thursday.

Vajpayee's Bharatiya Janata Party needs to win over smaller opposition parties to offset the loss, or at least persuade them to abstain.

Vajpayee may draw some benefits from Sunday's test launch of a new generation missile. He is projecting the test as a matter of national prestige and self-reliance. It comes 11 months after India conducted underground nuclear explosions, which proved hugely popular with the public.

With only days left before parliament meets, the political scenario was still confused. "Currently, the strategy is to bring down the BJP-led government first and then fight for the spoils," said Arun Nehru, a former leader of the opposition Congress Party.

Jayaram Jayalalitha, the madras-based leader who precipitated the crisis, was due to hold a round of talks in New Delhi before

finally deciding whether to pull out of the coalition. She already has withdrawn her ministers from the Vajpayee government and has begun talking with Sonia Gandhi.

The coalition has a slim majority of 276 seats in the 545-seat Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament. Jayalalitha controls 18 seats.

Gandhi says her party is no hurry to form the next government.

Reports say if the government falls, Congress will try to form a minority government, relying on the parliamentary support of small Leftists and Socialist parties which would not join the government or get cabinet seats.

If that government cannot perform effectively, an election could be called.

India has already had four governments since elections were held in 1996. After three coalitions collapsed Indians went to the polls again in 1998, but again the verdict was split.

Indian missile launch sends message to China

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's successful test of a new intermediate range ballistic missile has drawn strong protests from rival Pakistan, but analysts say the loudest alarm bells will be ringing in Beijing.

Sunday's launch of the solid-fuel Agni-II, capable of delivering nuclear warheads from mobile platforms to anywhere in Pakistan and most of China, signalled India's capacity to develop an effective nuclear deterrent following its underground nuclear test in May 1998.

"Basically, the Agni-II is an insurance policy against any major reversal in Indo-Chinese relations," said Jasjit Singh, director of the Indian Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA).

The government obviously feels that a missile with a range of 2,500 kilometres will give it more confidence in dealing with the Chinese."

The Chinese foreign ministry on Monday voiced "regret and concern" over Sunday's test, arguing it violated U.N. resolutions and warning it could "initiate a new arms race in South Asia."

India and China, which fought a brief border war in 1962, are to resume talks on the disputed Himalayan border by the end of April or early May.

Bilateral relations became strained early last year after Defence Minister George Fernandes described China as India's main enemy. Ties deteriorated further after India

cited a perceived China threat as one reason behind its nuclear tests.

A commentary in the Hindustan Times on Monday said Beijing was lying in bed of its own making.

"Any test of this nature will attract talk of ulterior motives, but the fact is that the launch had to be carried out before the end of April when the monsoon sets in," Singh said.

Another Western diplomat here pointed out that the government's political difficulties were "far too serious to be offset by a single missile launch."

The Indian press response on Monday was generally enthusiastic.

"Agni II powers India forward," ran the headline in the Asian Age, while the Pioneer newspaper hailed the country's arrival as a "missile superpower."

The Hindu newspaper ran a commentary warning foreign countries, especially those involved in the NATO actions in Yugoslavia, against criticising India.

"It will be a cruel irony if those responsible for blatant violation of international law and norms, and threatening world peace take exception to India's efforts to cope with its threat perceptions," it said.

IDSA's Singh meanwhile, said the government was unlikely to stop with the Agni-II.

"There is no real point in investing so much money, unless India intends to develop a 5,000-kilometre inter-continental ballistic missile."



Singer Gloria Estefan and husband Emilio pose for photographers at the American Latino Media Arts Awards presented by The National Council of La Raza April 11 in Pasadena. The Estefans won the Ricardo Montalban Life Achievement Award at the awards, which honour the positive portrayals of Latinos in American film and television (Reuters photo)

4 killed in new E. Timor clashes

DILI, East Timor (R) — At least four people died on Monday in separate clashes in the disputed territory of East Timor, where hundreds of pro-Jakarta loyalists rallied in the capital Dili, saying they were ready for war.

Indonesian troops killed two pro-independence guerrillas in a fire fight in Talimoro village near Ermera, 25 km southwest of Dili, the Armed Forces (ABRI) said in a statement.

ABRI also said guerrillas shot dead a former East Timorese district head and an Indonesian soldier in a separate attack on a vehicle in Bacau.

Both incidents occurred early Monday morning.

Antara gave no further details.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said he hoped details of the autonomy offer could be completed by the end of April.

Alatas was due to meet his Portuguese counterpart, Jaime Gama, on April 22 in New York.

"This concept will be completed by the end of April and there will be a direct vote in July," Alatas told reporters after a cabinet meeting.

But he repeated earlier warnings that the violence cast doubt over whether the vote could go ahead.

We have to see first whether it can be achieved or not, I can't promise it."

In Dili, hundreds of pro-Jakarta loyalists rallied outside the beachfront office of the Jakarta-appointed governor, saying they were ready for war with pro-independence groups.

"We are ready to face the pro-independence groups who have been ordered by Xanana to take up arms," a pro-Jakarta militia leader, Eurico Gutierrez, told the crowd.

Detained rebel leader Xanana Gusmao last week called on East Timorese to take up arms against Indonesia and its supporters in retaliation for mounting violence from East Timorese backing Jakarta's rule of the former Portuguese territory.

Since then, loyalist militiamen have attacked several pro-independence areas, killing scores of civilians. But there have been no reported offensives by pro-independence forces.

The core guerrilla force numbers fewer than 200,

with less than that number of guns. They are backed by civil groups armed mainly with machetes and homemade spears and bows and arrows.

With the military and pro-Jakarta militias controlling the roads, it was difficult for the pro-independence groups to muster any substantial gathering, diplomats say.

Dili was calm on Monday following weekend reports by pro-independence groups that soldiers killed 13 civilians travelling in a minibus in Ermera.

The deaths could not be verified by independent groups and military and police officials were not available for comment.

Last week, Jakarta loyalists killed 25 people in Liquisa town. East Timorese spiritual leader Bishop Carlos Belo has said.

Indonesia invaded the eastern half of Timor island in 1975 and annexed it the following year in a move not recognised by the United Nations.

WW II contamination showing up on Saipan

SAIPAN, Northern Mariana Islands (AFP) — Residents here are beginning to show "warning signs" of chemical contamination caused by abandoned World War II war material, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) resident representative to the U.S. Juan N. Babauta said Monday.

Babauta, in a letter to U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen, said he had been alerted by accounts from medical professionals practising in the U.S. Pacific territory of CNMI that cases of unusual cancers, an abnormal number of chromosomal defects and high rates of congenital heart disease thrive among the local population, particularly in Tanapag town in the northern part of the island.

The contamination is believed caused by polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), a suspected cancer-causing synthetic chemical used under the U.S. Nike-Zeus missile programme.

The PCB, initial official assessment has shown, has thrived into the Tanapag top soil.

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Initiatives towards settlement

GERMANY'S NEW peace initiative on Kosovo is predicated on the deployment of non-NATO forces in the Yugoslav province once Serb military and paramilitary forces are withdrawn. Belgrade's objection to the deployment of a NATO-led international force in Kosovo was one of the principal bones of contention between the two sides. If what really stands in the way of reaching a settlement over Kosovo is the composition of the international force to police the ceasefire and restore calm and security to Kosovars, then Bonn's initiative may very well carry the seeds of an end to hostilities and the return to the negotiating table.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's talks with her Russian counterpart Igor Ivanov in Oslo Tuesday may provide the proper venue for airing the German ideas and to gauge Moscow's reaction to them. Coming as it does on the eve of the Albright-Ivanov talks, the meeting of the NATO foreign ministers in Brussels Monday also sets the stage for exploring other ideas to end the war in the Balkans including the partitioning of Kosovo in a desperate bid to reconcile the demands of both the Serbs and Kosovars. Washington has recently hinted that the partition of Kosovo would not be ruled out in search of a permanent solution to the conflict.

Belgrade has already blinked in the standoff with NATO, when it declared a unilateral ceasefire and the acceptance of the return of ethnic Albanian refugees to their homes and country. True, the Serb forces continued their offensive against the ethnic Albanians forcing even greater numbers to flee their towns and villages in recent days, but the fact remains that Belgrade has been sending new signals that it is open to compromise. This is where Bonn's new ideas, the Brussels NATO meeting Monday and the Albright-Ivanov's parley on Tuesday could set the stage for productive peace talks.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Mu'nes Razzaz said observers feel that current U.S. policy is based only on "suspending" international crises and not solving them, and that the White House is not keen to seriously find a solution for such problems. Why is NATO hesitating to put an end to the Kosovo issue by committing ground troops, and what about the Iraq situation, where people are still suffering under sanctions while the humanitarian crisis is being ignored, asked Razzaz. The Arab-Israeli conflict supports this view of U.S. policy, which came about after the cold war: since the Madrid conference, the superpower has not seriously worked on pushing the deadlocked peace process forward or tried to stop Israeli intransigence, said the writer. The U.S. prefers "half-solutions," which keep international problems in a continued state of confusion, so all involved parties will always need U.S. "assistance and pressure," according to Razzaz, who argued that bombing Yugoslavia will not solve the problem, and only the U.S. stands to gain.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket said it has become clear that the U.S. and its allies' decision to ignore the U.N. and illegitimately use military power and economic sanctions in the end will only cause destruction to countries. After weeks of NATO bombings against Yugoslavia on the pretext of protecting Kosovo's Albanians, the practical results have been more destruction and suffering to around 500,000 people, who have become refugees, said Saket. NATO has started bombing bridges, factories, oil refineries, power plants and other infrastructure, and this policy will destroy the country's decades-old progress, said the writer. Although the U.S. and NATO refuses to use military power when it comes to committing ground troops, they do not hesitate in using violence, and weapons of mass destruction to kill thousands of people for the sake of their own interests, Saket concluded.

Disappearing ducks and government credibility

THIS WINTER'S drought, following last summer's frightening problems with water quality and household delivery cut-offs, emphasises this region's dangerous water shortages — yet, many available solutions are at hand, if only the political will were there to implement them. Our hydrology problem requires a political solution. If our politicians try to fool us with reckless promises of magical new supplies of water, we should take them to court and charge them with irresponsible dereliction of duty and endangering the well-being of future generations.

In a report entitled "From Scarcity to Security: Averting a Water Crisis in the Middle East and North Africa," the always credible World Bank noted recently that the Middle East and North Africa region suffers the world's lowest rate of net renewable water availability (1,250 cubic metres per person per year, compared to 3,283 in Asia, 7,485 in Africa and 18,742 in North America). More alarming, the annual per capita availability of water has declined by 60 per cent since 1960, and is expected to drop by another 50 per cent by the year 2025. If you think this is bad, wait until next decade, and the one after that.

Our situation in Jordan is even worse than the regional average; we enjoy about 213 cubic metres of water per person per year, and extraction of water in the highland aquifers is almost 80 per cent above the natural recharge rate. We reached this crisis situation due to many reasons in several sectors, and we have to get out of it in the same multi-sectoral way. The government of Jordan is right to inform us of the seriousness of the matter, but wrong to suggest in the same breath that the solution lies largely in pumping underground and municipal use in south Jordan, and to attract people to live in the south. This could be an important bridge to promoting regional development in the south, and slowing the development of Jordan as a city-state around Amman.

Arab governments and citizens need to avoid the tendency to stick our heads in the sand. We should be honest, mature, and politically self-confident enough to tackle the water problem in all its dimensions, which are:

Sectoral: The allocation of over two-thirds of our water for agricultural use is clearly not sustainable in the long run under present conditions. Successive governments since the 1960s have blindly promoted agricultural development without sufficiently assessing the best use of our limited water to serve our overall national interest. Agriculture should be restricted to those sectors that yield high value while using water most efficiently (and that also promote the use of Jordanian labour as much as possible). There is no room for sentiment or romantic nationalism here.

Technical: We have massive potential to conserve, catch, store freshwater through rigorous technical means. These include recycling on a large scale (especially for farming); investing heavily in building leak-proof pipe systems (the World Bank says 54 per cent of urban water is lost before reaching the consumer); and building home and community cisterns that catch the rainwater (like the Nabataeans did so impressively: many of those empty chambers you see in Petra were cisterns, and many of them still fill up with water after a rain).

Political: The basic cause of our water problem is not hydrological, it is political. Successive governments since the 1960s have lacked the political strength to strictly zone the highland urban areas to preserve the best fertile lands for growing fruit trees and ramified crops; instead, our political system has caved in to the greed of profits that people could make and did make from rising land prices and urban sprawl. Also political is the uneven distribution of the water storage burden; the poor suffer the most, while the well-off and politically well connected enjoy a steady stream of tankers coming to their homes. I would be intrigued to know how

View from the Fourth Circle



Rami G. Khouri

many government ministers and high officials have had to scurry around the 7th Circle looking for water tankers in August.

The technical hydrological issues are made more complex by the layers of political resentment that now cloud this sector.

A third political problem is the state's apparent inability to fully control the excessive exploitation of water via private wells, perhaps because many private well owners tend to be politically and socially powerful. A fourth is the insufficiently strict pricing system that allows most people to waste water, instead of encouraging them to conserve it. A fifth is the lack of political will to force industries to stop polluting sources such as the Zarqa River.

Such political constraints mean the government is now hindered by a certain lack of credibility and authority when it needs to use all its moral, technical, economic, and political force to address the serious water problems.

A fascinating new publication by the International Committee of the Red Cross, ominously entitled "Water and War," notes that "the fundamental issue for all is the need to find ways to address the more basic political, economic and social issues that are so essential for ensuring, inter alia, the availability of water and access to it in

the future." This is the obvious lesson from our own experience in Jordan: clearly, we have not found the way to address the basic issues essential for ensuring availability of water and access to it. This is despite the fact that technical solutions to our water problem are known, rather easy, and available today: pollution controls, recycling, greater efficiency, small-scale home reservoirs, better pricing, strict conservation incentives, smaller sectoral allocations, rigorous aquifer protection, more equitable sharing of occasional shortages, and selective desalination. We also have plenty of smart, honest men and women in Jordan who can fulfil their responsibilities as public servants — if the governance system would only give them the longevity and political support to do the job.

We don't really have a water problem. We have a political problem of weak or irresponsible governments and public servants that have evaded coming to terms with the water challenge, compounded by lack of continuity among senior officials in this sector. Consequently, we now face a terrible crisis that is totally and embarrassingly man-made, with steadily diminishing government political credibility in this vital sector.

This or any other government must first act to regain public trust, by admitting and assessing the mistakes of the past, and simultaneously developing new approaches that are realistic, disciplined, responsible, equitable, and sustainable. Perhaps this government should hold a public meeting on the water issue at the rather dry Azraq Wetlands Reserve, before proceeding any further with grandiose plans, pipelines, and promises in this sector. If they don't do it for us, or for the ducks, perhaps they could do it for their grandchildren.

We don't need just to get through the coming summer; we need to get through the coming century, and the policies of the past century simply will not do.

Letters to the editor

The foe in the mirror

A COUPLE of days ago I read an article in the Times of London entitled "Peace Dividend across the River Jordan" on how peace is slowly changing the Middle East for the better. The essay was about a young Jordanian entrepreneur, Omar Salah, who, taking advantage of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, set up a joint venture with Israeli counterparts in Irbid, my home town, with an annual turnover of \$2 million pounds. His company, according to the Jordan Times (Friday, April 9, 1999) is now the largest garment manufacturer in the country employing more than 2,000 people and exporting to such well-known outlets in Europe and the U.S. as Gap, Banana Republic, and Marks & Spencer.

You can imagine how proud and elated I was to read this article. At last, I thought, my fellow countrymen are beginning to shed the antiquated mind sets and the aravistic world views which for years, had clouded our vision, constrained our action and turned us into zombie-like figures too afraid to embrace the rapidly changing world around us! At last we are adapting to the new realities of our time.

Until I browsed through the April 11 edition of the Jordan Times and read about a group calling itself the 'anti-normalisation camp' who are apparently huffing and puffing because an Israeli actor — an Arab Israeli for that — is about to perform on the Jordan stage. For a moment I couldn't believe what I was reading. Are these people for real? Is there really an active group in Jordan concentrating all its energy on fighting normalisation of relations with a neighbour we have no choice but to live with whether we like it or not? And for what end? And how could any alternative to normalisation possibly help our people and our country???

It is a great shame that the foresight of those two great Jordanian patriots King Abdullah and King Hussein, the founders of our country — may they rest in peace — who saw no benefit to us from a confined state of alienation with our Israeli neighbours, had not rubbed off on the zealous in our society who still live in fear of "Zionist infiltration and conspiracies!"

Israel, my fellow countrymen, is no longer the enemy! If those fanatics wish to identify the real enemy of progress in our country all they need to do is to look in the mirror.

Dr. Kamal Tawfiq Nimri
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No parallels

GEORGE S. Hishmeh's article ("Parallels Between Kosovo and Palestine, J.T. April 6") overlooks a very important point. Back in 1947, it was the Zionists who accepted the U.N. Partition Plan which would have divided Palestine between the Jews and the Arabs. This territorial division was unfavourable to the Jews because two-thirds of the land allocated to them consisted of the Negev desert. Two-thirds of the land granted to the Palestinians was relatively fertile.

Despite being offered better land than the Jews, the Arabs rejected the Partition Plan and attacked with catastrophic results to themselves. Had they been willing to compromise, as the Jews were, there would not be a refugee problem in the Middle East today. Several bloody wars with scores of thousands of casualties would also have been avoided.

The Serbs never accepted a partition plan and rejected NATO's attempts at mediation. Also, they are not content to simply expel the Muslim population. They murder large numbers of civilians and molest thousands of Muslim women. This did not happen in the Middle East.

Another point mentioned in the article is the rather lukewarm support of the Arab countries for the Muslim Kosovars. In contrast to this, when the Jews of one country are being harassed, they can always count on the ardent support of their coreligionists throughout the world.

Thus there are really no "parallels between Kosovo and Palestine."

Avraham Nahoumi
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The Russian threat

By Gwynne Dyer

I HAVE seen Boris Yeltsin drunk and I'm pretty sure I have seen him sober, but unless he does something obvious like singing or falling over it takes a while to decide: both his body language and his speech patterns tend to blur the issue. So it's hard to judge how much thought went into his blood-curdling remarks in a meeting with his Duma speaker, Gennady Seleznyov, that was televised on Friday.

"I've told the NATO people, the Americans, the Germans: 'Don't push us into military action.'

Otherwise there would certainly be a European, and perhaps a world war," said the Russian president. And Seleznyov later added that in portions of the interview not shown on TV, Yeltsin also spoke of retargeting Russian nuclear missiles on NATO states.

It was just what the Western media needed on a slow day in the air war over Yugoslavia, and they leapt on the notion of a new cold or even hot war with Russia. But NATO's commander, General Wesley Clark, dismissed the threat: "We're going to continue with the mission exactly as planned, regardless of political and diplomatic atmospherics."

It was, indeed, just 'atmospherics.' As White House spokesman David Leavy said soon after the Yeltsin broadcast: "We've been officially reassured by Russia at a high level that it will not allow itself to be drawn into the conflict in the Balkans." That assurance probably came directly from Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who has really been running the country since the market crash last August destroyed most of Yeltsin's remaining influence.

So why did Yeltsin make these empty threats? It is not necessary to conclude that he was drunk. He had a quite rational personal motive: to ingratiate himself with a Duma dominated by Communists and right-wing nationalists, both anti-Western in their attitudes, who will vote on his impeachment in the coming week.

Yeltsin may also have been conscious of the close parallels between what Russia did to Chechnya on his orders, and what Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic has recently been doing to Kosovo — and here the personal motive blends into the official policy, for governments that have committed atrocities against their minority populations, or foresee the need to do so in future to

stop them from seceding, are always hot on absolute national sovereignty.

That is why NATO is conducting this operation without the blessing of the United Nations. China, anticipating the need to stamp down hard on Tibet again in the future, joined Russia in vetoing U.N. intervention to stop the killing in Kosovo. But this is more a theoretical than a practical concern for both Beijing and Moscow.

Even if a successful NATO operation in Kosovo were to set a precedent for future military interventions against smallish countries like Rwanda or Cambodia that start massacring parts of their own populations, great powers with nuclear weapons can be quite confident that nobody will ever try to appeal to the precedent to them. Throughout the horrendous Russian onslaught on the Chechen people, for example, NATO never said 'booo.'

Yeltsin's wild talk was mainly designed to appeal to the emotions and prejudices of the Duma, and of Russian public opinion in general. Which naturally raises the larger question: why did Russians more or less freely elect a Duma that is dominated by anti-Western attitudes, and why are almost all Russians now in a state of utter outrage about the wicked things NATO is doing to their gallant and innocent Serbian brothers?

The first question is relatively easy to answer. When the hopes that were aroused by the overthrow of Communism were betrayed by the new elite (largely the old elite after a quick change of ideological clothes), popular resentment was directed not only at the cynical thugs who 'privatised' the old state-owned economy into their own pockets, but also at the West.

Russia didn't actually get a free-market economy, but what's wrong with that? Most of them don't like it, so they blame the West. (One-third of them even believe that the collapse of the Soviet Union was due to a NATO plot!) And this all builds on 75 years of Communist propaganda against the corrupt and decadent West, and on traditions of anti-Western thought that have even deeper roots in Russian history.

But there is a free press in Russia, and most Russians are well educated, rational human beings. How can they blindly back the Serbs in this conflict, ignoring all the evidence of massive crimes committed against the Albanians of Kosovo? In other places with a free press, many people question the wisdom and the legality of NATO's use of force against Milosevic, but rela-

tively few doubt its motives: Kosovo is of no economic or strategic value to anyone.

In Russia, virtually nobody believes that NATO's motives in Kosovo are genuinely humanitarian, just as they cannot believe that the Serbs are in the wrong. The bombing of Serbia therefore seems a malevolent, almost incomprehensible act to Russians, and their media carry preposterous theories to explain it. NATO needs Kosovo as a military base, or it wants to test new weapons, or to create jobs by using up old weapons. Or maybe it's a dress rehearsal for a Western conspiracy to use force to stop developing countries from stealing their markets.

If the hordes of wretched refugees from the cleansing of Kosovo as shown on Russian TV at all, it is implied that they are fleeing NATO bombs. And this is not the result of official censorship and propaganda. It is intelligent Russians trying to make sense of what is (to them) unintelligible.

It's not so much that they love the Serbs (though some are swayed by the old pan-Slavic slogans). They simply cannot believe that in a conflict between Christians and Muslims, Stavrov Orthodox Christians can be the villains and Muslims the victims. The notion just does not compute: all of Russian history and culture tells them that Muslims are the enemy. So the war MUST be about something else than protecting Muslim Kosovars from Serbian aggression.

Nothing can be done to change this Russian mind-set in less than a generation. And nothing needs to be done about it, because Primakov is not affected by these stereotypes. He is a fluent Arabic-speaker with wide experience of the Muslim World — and he knows enough about the Balkans to have no illusions about Milosevic.

Primakov, who will probably run for president when Yeltsin's term ends next year, makes the occasional pro-Serbian public gesture to cater to popular passions, but he will never let himself be drawn into helping Milosevic militarily. Even in Russian domestic politics, the real impact of the Kosovo conflict will probably be slight — so long as it is over before the parliamentary elections in December, and well before the presidential elections of July 2000.

The writer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.

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Features/News

A week in the life — Teman Avingaq, an Inuit

By Mike Donkin

THE SPARKLE in the Arctic sky is not the Northern Lights but a fireworks show. There is the promise of dancing until dawn. Along the frozen shore of Fox Basin everyone from the settlement of Igloolik has gathered. Such frivolity is rare in a community that is an aircraft flight from anywhere.

Teman Avingaq watches with his girlfriend, Ronda, as a green trail arcs over the wooden houses, which are perched on piles clear of the permafrost and snowdrifts. A starburst picks out fishing boats in the harbour. A week of festivities on the ice is Igloolik's way of marking a new beginning in the lives of the Inuit. It is the end of a 30-year legal and political struggle to control the vast wasteland in Canada, which will be called Nunavut, "Our Land," in the Inuit language. It is the beginning, Teman wants to believe, of a time when a people who lost their way after Canada colonised them can feel at home again.

On Sunday, Teman takes time off

from his three jobs — as a hunter, a carpenter and a radio-show host — to go with Ronda, their two daughters and their son to a feast for Nunavut. "We call it country food," he says. "Caribou, seal, walrus — the animals we have always caught." They travel on a not very traditional Japanese snowmobile, or skidoo. Teman admits: "It would be hard for people here to go anywhere without a skidoo." There is also church to attend. Teman walks to service with his father, Jacob, who preaches at the hut with a bell-tower — Igloolik's Protestant chapel. When the missionaries first arrived two churches were built. Protestant and Catholics competed to convert those such as Teman's father who had been forced to stop their nomadic life, roaming after the caribou herds. The Protestant missionary converted those one side of the main street, the Catholic those the other side. Then both discouraged their congregations from mixing.

The next day Teman had planned to complete a carpentry contract at the school but it may not be possible.

"The wind should come from the south," father advises son. "A south wind is a good wind for walrus"

"The school classroom has to have a door. We have no trees. So the door has to be blown up. Now they say it's not on today's plane." Nunavut's fledgling economy must grow to provide work here. Half the Inuit are unemployed. Teman is realistic: "I

think the delegates we now have in our assembly will know about things better and try harder. But Canada will still have to help us, help us a lot." On Tuesday the classroom door arrives and the weather is right to install it. "This is a beautiful day for April — a warm one," Teman says. The temperature is minus 20C. Often in April doorways cannot be left open to work on and fingers can freeze to the handles of saws and screwdrivers.

Jacob has spent the day exhibiting the seal hunting tools, once the only trade that sustained Inuit families. Back home he talks to Teman, who has decided to head off tomorrow for the edge of the sea-ice. "The wind should come from the south." father advises son. "A south wind is a good wind for walrus." The following day the wind and the advice prove sound. Teman and his brother-in-law Ikey swathe themselves in skins — caribou coats, husky fur trousers and sealskin boots — and harness sled to skidoo for the run to the ice floe edge. They shoot a seal, harpoon it to haul it in and skin it efficiently on

the ice. It is a matter-of-fact process. The intestines, a particular delicacy, are stripped out and neatly plaited. A walrus, too slow to notice their presence, is killed. Its tusks are cut off. "A carver might take them," Teman says. "We have been lucky. There's a lot of meat here and this is still the best food we get to eat. The packets and the frozen goods we buy from the store cost so much." As darkness descends, Teman and Ikey build an igloo in an hour. This is the best, the only shelter for an Arctic night.

On Thursday Teman takes Ronda to a meeting of the settlement's Alcohol Licensing Committee, which she chairs.

Many Inuit drift into drink as their early ambitions are disappointed. There are no bars and no off-sales of spirits in Igloolik. Any resident who wants to drink must apply to have it flown up monthly. Their requests are scrutinised by bottle, by can, and can. They are frequently refused.

Teman goes on to the third of his jobs where he tackles another social dilemma. "I do a talk show on community radio," he explains. "It's in

our own language of course. But we are talking about our language too." The new Nunavut Assembly will conduct the territory's affairs in the Inuit language, Inuktitut. One question is whether children should learn it for longer. "Many jobs have to be done in English," Teman says.

"Our children have to be perfect in both." At the weekend the official celebrations are over. Teman and his family gather. The children chew the dark fibrous meat from ribs of boiled seal. Their grandparents slice raw flesh and liver from the carcass of the animal that has been defrosting in the house since it was brought back from the ice floe. Teman picks from one pot and then the other. He smiles as he acknowledges the parallel. "We have a foot in both worlds as Inuit. We cannot only be a part of the world we once had," Teman's son suddenly squeals and holds out a milk tooth. A seal rib has proved too tough. His grandfather tells him: "You will need stronger teeth for the walrus."

— *The Independent*

Analysts, politicians see 'changing realities' in Jordan-Israel ties

(Continued from page 1)

At the same time, His Majesty King Abdullah, now in Dubai on a tour of Gulf states, and the government are pursuing an inter-Arab rapprochement initiated in February by Damascus and Riyadh. Both are highly critical of the Kingdom's peace policy and are said to be preparing for a retreat in the warm relationship with Israel colouring by King Hussein.

In a recent interview with the London-based Al Quds Al Arabi, King Abdullah himself suggested that priorities in Amman had been rearranged. He told the newspaper that the Kingdom's relations with Israel will not be at the expense of ties with Arab countries, particularly Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Palestine.

"We have seen some signs of change," said another senior official who requested anonymity. "But peace is not 'on a back burner' as some would like to believe. We have a treaty. We are committed to it, and we have already done certain things within the context of peace. That is not going to change."

Peace is still, and for any foreseeable future will remain, a strategic option for Jordan. The treaty, in theory, secures additional valuable water resources, and gives an international legal framework within which violations of water rights can be contested. It also ensures Jordan a place in crucial final status talks between Israel and the Palestinians when negotiations finally open, while the bilateral relationship also gives the Kingdom "strategic depth."

Other important benefits include the write-off of \$700 million in debt to the U.S. and \$225 million in annual aid, which has recently been augmented in a pledge from President Bill Clinton by another \$300 million over the next three fiscal years, as well as a promise to urge the Paris Club to reschedule even more of the Kingdom's \$6.8 billion debt. Officials also do not discount the establishment of the Qualified Industrial Zone in Irbid, a non-reciprocal duty and quota-free trade zone with the U.S.

It is also well-known that any official retreat in relations initiated by Jordan would not be well regarded in Washington, although the U.S. administration recently pinpointed Israeli policy as the main stumbling block to fostering deeper ties between Jordan and Israel at the popular level, alleviating pressure on officials in Amman to keep up a facade of content regardless of unfavourable developments.

Officially, ties remain steady, as exhibited by King Abdullah's reception of Netanyahu in early March. The Israeli premier was the first head of state to visit the Kingdom following the death of King Hussein. The Monarch also called Netanyahu last month upon changing the government to assure the Israeli premier that Rabbah would be pursuing the same path of peace as every prime minister before him. The Israeli press reported that high-ranking Israeli military officials had also visited Amman in February, while talks on water sharing arrangements to cope with the regional drought continue between the joint Jordanian-Israeli water committee, which is reportedly close to a deal on the recent water dispute. American Jewish groups that visited over the past month received the usual warm reception in official circles.

However, officials say that the future relationship may no longer be characterised by the flourishing warm gestures of magnanimity that often were common under the reign

of the late King, who sought to show the tolerant face of the Arab World and a change in Arab thinking towards the Jewish state.

Peace will be maintained officially, although it will not longer be the issue of the day.

"We have to view what is happening in terms of its historical moment," said one official. "The coincidence of King Hussein's illness and death and the change in [regional and domestic] realities has confused people. So, we have to ask is the change that we sense a result of the change in ruler, or is it a result of changing regional and domestic realities? It is a result of changing realities."

Officials on both sides of the Jordan River appreciate that relations with the Arab World and with Israel are not mutually exclusive, but on either side, analysts worry about the "new direction's" consequences on popular peace.

"Both Jordanians and Israelis at the popular level see the peace process deteriorating," one Israeli analyst told the Jordan Times. "Normalisation has not been deserted, but there now is a concern that, unless the new King and new [Jordanian] prime minister are aggressive in promoting normalisation, the lower echelons, uncertain of support, will not move popular relations ahead."

Indeed, Jordan's feisty opposition over the past nine months has detected an opening through which to denounce popular peace-building and gauge the government's reaction.

Last summer, the country's 13 professional associations gave an 11th hour apology to Al Urdan Al Jadid Research Centre, declining to participate in a long-scheduled conference on their role in civil society.

They excused themselves on the grounds that the conference was funded by a foreign NGO with links to "international Zionism," after a series of articles published in the local press outlining the "links" between several foreign NGOs in Jordan and Zionist elements.

They also accused the centre's director, Hani Hourani, of "normalising relations" with Israel at a conference last year in Morocco.

Later, they attempted to launch a boycott of a leading Arabic daily newspaper for publishing an advertisement for the Israeli air carrier, El Al. Most recently, the head of the Jordan Engineers Association, Ali Abu Suleyman, said the association's anti-normalisation committee "this month would publish its list of 'normalising' Jordanians — which according to Abu Suleyman 'is not a blacklist.' He suggested that even links to Arab-Israelis could 'raise suspicions.'

Until now, there has been no response from any official or public opinion leader criticising — or supporting — the associations' antics.

Just a year ago, such behaviour would have received a strong official rebuke, at the very least. Analysts now say that Jordan's new "détente" is both a good and bad strategy. Opposition naturally needs a channel of expression. But fiery statements from officials, some fear, pander only to public opinion, and could create popular expectations about the Kingdom's relationship with Israel that simply cannot be met. At the same time, elections in Israel may soon result in a new, more forthcoming peace partner for both Jordan and the Palestinians, who may be intimidated by an image of animosity flowing from the east.

"Why create this image of hostility?" asked one analyst. "It's harmful!"

Meanwhile, Jordanian and Israeli officials concede that the popularity of peace is becoming less of a concern to both sides. Israeli officials contend that Jordan has little choice but to maintain the relationship, while Jordanian officials say that King Abdullah is unconstrained by that consideration since the toughest decision — to sign a treaty — has already been made.

All of those developments coincided with growing domestic troubles, characterised by enmity over poor economic growth, growing unemployment and poverty and high-level graft. All have been accompanied by popular frustration at Jordan's isolation from the rest of the Arab World as a result of its peace policy.

"Neglected spheres are now the focus. We have to take crucial, strategic political decisions on our economy. We have to reform our education system to make our labour force valuable to other markets. And in our external relations, the emphasis now is on improving Jordan-Arab relations."

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Under scenario one, if the plant continues operating at full capacity, pumping 1,200 cubic metres per hour, and if available water resources remain constant, Amman will receive its average total of 50mcm this summer and the supply system will not be changed.

Under scenario two, if the quantity or quality of water coming to Zai drops, then the plant will work at half capacity, providing only 2mcm monthly, the envisioned wells in the plan will be exploited to provide 1.7mcm a month and water supplies will be rationed.

Some of the water supplied to Balqa, Zarqa and Madaba will be diverted to the capital.

Measures to deal with the third "precautionary" scenario, which has a "low" possibility of happening, will be enforced if the Zai plant stops operating, during which Amman and Balqa will "face a real water crisis."

Water supplies will be rationed further and Amman will be divided into six or seven zones, where 60 per cent of residents will be supplied through the main network and the rest will receive water from 300 public and private tankers. In Balqa, the crisis will primarily hit Salt, where residents living in high areas will get water six hours a week while those living in low locations will receive water 12 hours a week.

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Some Uzbeks predict it could vanish altogether by 2015 if radical steps are not taken.

Indigenous animal species are largely extinct, killed off by the drop in water levels and rising salt content.

"The damage to aquatic fauna has been massive," said Werner Roider

of the World Bank Uzbek Mission, who is closely involved in the bank's major water management programme in central Asia.

Disease and infant mortality are high in the areas surrounding the area, often due to a lack of drinking water and poor diet. And unemployment is rising on the unproductive, salt-caked lands.

The sea's misfortune is one of the

cubic metres from both arteries reaching the Aral in 1998, a big jump on 1997.

"Last year we had a lot of water, but of course it will not do anything to solve the problem," he said.

Along the road from Nukus, the administrative centre of the Karakalpakstan region where Muynak is located, he pointed to fields so white that they look as if they are covered in snow. In fact it is salt left by the dwindling water.

The irony of declining cotton yields because of irrigation designed to boost crops was not lost on Ashbekov.

Muynak itself is a sorry sight. Its roads are dusty and dry, buildings rot and decay, families live in squalid shacks and men and women wander aimlessly through the streets.

Many have left the ghost town, and those who remain seem to be there merely to live out the rest of their days.

"There is nowhere to go and nothing to do," said Aibek, a 35-year-old driver, as his old Uaz jeep bounced across what used to be the Aral seabed. "For the kids this place is a nightmare. Many are resorting to drink."

At the local canning plant, once Muynak's dominant employer, production is down to 2.5 million tons of seafood a year from 17 million at its peak. The fish no longer comes from the Aral, but from the Baltic and Caspian seas.

From the top of the hill outside town, endless sand is all that can be seen from cliffs once lapped by the Aral. Only the odd rusting hulk of a boat and a gas well break the monotony.

Bakht Sharafova, a senior doctor at Muynak's hospital, said the town was battling to contain high rates of anaemia, cancer, tuberculosis and hepatitis.

The five central Asian presidents are due to discuss the Aral Sea at a summit which officially opens in the Turkmen capital of Ashgabat on Thursday.

Unlike in Soviet times, they now

readily recognise the disaster their predecessors have lumbered them with.

But economic pressures and political wranglings are expected to prevent any real action being taken to resolve the problem.

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan rely heavily on cotton for vital hard currency, and are unlikely to want to sacrifice it at a time when the emerging markets crisis and low commodity prices have brought their economies to the brink of crisis.

Roider of the World Bank said leaders will be unlikely to seek a fundamental change in regional water management.

"They know if they start tinkering, they do not know where they will come out," he said in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent.

He said the Aral could never return to what it was. The best that could be hoped for was a containment of the problem or for a slight rise in the water levels over time.

"For the Aral to return they would have to stop all irrigation for 10 years. People would die upstream just to refill the sea. What is the value in that?"

With shock waves from the crisis buffeting Eastern Europe, Budapest patched up a row with Moscow, saying it would let a blocked Russian aid convoy travel through Hungary to Yugoslavia.

Fighting that flared at the weekend on the Kosovar-Albanian border between Serb forces and Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) guerrillas raged on for most of Monday, and eight shells hit the northern Albanian village of Trojope, Albanian police said. In Belgrade, Serbian state television accused NATO of using its helicopters to transport guerrilla forces to the border to launch attacks inside Yugoslavia. It also said Albania was contributing artillery support to the KLA "terrorists."

On a visit to Madrid, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said he had not yet had an answer from Milosevic on a five-step proposal he made to end the Kosovo crisis with UN mediation.

The NATO campaign aims to reverse what the alliance calls ethnic cleansing of the mainly Muslim Albanian majority in Kosovo and enable nearly one million displaced people to return to their homes with a NATO-led military force to protect them.

Belgrade says its forces are merely fighting

Libyan economy waking up from its long sleep

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libya is waking up from the seven-year hibernation period imposed by U.N. sanctions, and preparing to revitalise its economy by opening up to the outside world.

A number of countries, led by the European Union — Italy in particular, followed by Germany, Spain, France and Britain — but also South Korea and Japan are waiting eagerly to take advantage of the opening up of the Libyan market.

The Italian group AGIP, the German Wintershall, the French Elf and Total — both of which returned to Libya two years ago after a long absence — and the Spanish Repsol have signalled their interest in prospecting and developing oil resources.

U.S. companies, which are in theory banned by the D'Amato law from investing large sums in oil in Libya or Iran, are also showing an interest in the Libyan market.

The sanctions were imposed in 1992, in an attempt to force Libya to hand over two of its nationals suspected of involvement in the 1988 bombing of a PanAm airliner over Lockerbie in Scotland, which killed 270 people.

After years of wrangling, Washington and London agreed last year to Libyan demands that the men should be tried in a "neutral" country, and last week they were handed over for a trial

under Scottish law to be held in the Netherlands.

In consequence, the United Nations immediately suspended the sanctions, with the understanding that they will be completely lifted in 90 days.

Libya estimated last year that the sanctions have caused more than 10,000 deaths because of the unavailability of medicines and cost the economy some \$26.5 billion.

Nevertheless, the country, the richest in North Africa but with a population of only 5.2 million, managed more or less to maintain its standard of living with its gross domestic product currently at around \$7,000 per capita.

Social services which were greatly expanded in the 1970s and '80s, making health and education completely free, were hardly affected by the sanctions.

Nor did they affect the prices of basic commodities, which have remained the same since Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi took power in 1969.

Fifty kilogrammes of sugar remain at six dinars, one kilogramme of tea costs one dinar, 20 kilogrammes of pasta costs 2.5 dinars and a litre of milk half a dinar. The average monthly salary is 300 dinars.

Paradoxically, its oil income has been affected more by the fall in world prices than by the

sanctions.

Libya, unlike Iraq, has never been prevented from exporting its oil — currently at a rate of 1.26 million barrels per day — and using the money, an estimated seven billion dollars a year, as it pleased.

Oil is expected to account for 90 per cent of Libyan exports this year, and the income from it to provide 67 per cent of the annual budget.

Experts told AFP that Libya also has extensive foreign-currency reserves, invested in financial markets abroad.

Nevertheless, they say Libya, which has 60 years of reserves, could export much more. The end of sanctions will enable Tripoli to import material to modernise its equipment.

One major effect of the sanctions, imposed in 1992 in an effort to make Libya hand over two of its nationals wanted on suspicion of involvement in the 1988 Lockerbie bomb attack, was to isolate the country by banning international air travel.

As a result the three main airports, Tripoli, Benghazi and Sirte, have been confined to serving internal flights, and require major work to bring their infrastructure back up to scratch.

Shopkeepers and small producers are placing great hopes in the end of sanctions.

"We have had problems. Inflation on non-subsidised items has reached 15 per cent and consumption has gone down," said a man selling electrical equipment — all of it imported, except for the cheap Libyan-made "Garioon" brand items.

But he was worried about an upsurge in the black market and its effects on the Libyan dinar. At the moment the dollar changes for 0.46 dinars at the official rate, and 2.6 dinars unofficially.

The reforms, aimed at transforming Algeria into a market economy and securing its future in the globalised economy, have already brought down inflation from 30 per cent at the beginning of the decade to 5.0 per cent in 1998, according to official figures, disputed by some experts.

But in addition to the mass redundancies, the government was also forced to devalue the national currency, the dinar, officially by 35 per cent. However, on the flourishing currency blackmarket, the dinar plunged by some 75 per cent.

Officially, almost 30 per cent of the workforce is now unemployed with young people and women the worst off.

The dreams of independent Algeria's founding fathers of turning their country into a regional industrial powerhouse,

Economic conundrum awaits Algeria's next leader

ALGIERS (AFP) — Whoever wins Algerian presidential elections taking place Thursday will face the daunting task of steering the country's sagging oil-dependent economy towards better days.

Outgoing President Liamine Zeroual has already made great strides towards restructuring the economy which 30 years of centralised socialist policies had left in a shambles.

Zeroual, who was appointed head of state in January 1994 and elected president in 1995, signed a bailout accord with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in April 1994 but the price of IMF-instigated reforms has been very high.

Almost 400,000 people lost their jobs at loss-making state-owned firms which had survived up to then only on subsidies paid out of dwindling oil earnings.

The country was virtually bankrupt in 1994 despite producing more than 900,000 barrels of oil a day and exporting large quantities of natural gas, notably to Europe.

In exchange for its aid and a rescheduling of Algeria's foreign debt of some \$30 billion, the IMF demanded radical economic reforms, obliging successive governments to close down 1,000 state-owned companies with the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs.

The reforms, aimed at transforming Algeria into a market economy and securing its future in the globalised economy, have already brought down inflation from 30 per cent at the beginning of the decade to 5.0 per cent in 1998, according to official statements.

Around 70 per cent of Algeria's population are under 30 years of age, and tens of thousands of young people are growing up with virtually no hope of finding work.

The solution for them — and indeed some elderly folks — is the "black economy" popularly known here as "tabendo." This ranges from doing odd jobs to recycling old clothes or hawking cigarettes, candies or other items on street corners.

For most of these people the arguments of the seven candidates in the April 15 polls are of little interest.

"The leaders do what they want and we do as we like. We don't care about their laws. Everywhere the only thing that counts is influence and corruption," a 20-year-old unemployed youth said.

With a 1999 budget shortfall of 40 per cent, the next Algerian president will face some painful and difficult choices.

have evaporated.

However a thriving but disorganised private commercial sector has grown up in recent years with the mass importation of essential consumer products. So much so, that today, economists and some politicians say there is a risk Algeria will end up with an unproductive and "parasitic bazaar economy."

Foreign oil companies, notably American, British and Spanish companies, have been able to invest and exploit Saharan oil wells in southern Algeria, in partnership with the state oil firm Sonatrach.

However in other industries, investors have been slow to put in money, mainly because of fears about Islamic militant violence.

Since 1982, up to 100,000 people are feared to have died in the political violence triggered by the cancellation of legislative elections which Islamic fundamentalists were poised to win.

The harsh impact of economic reforms has traumatised many Algerians who since independence had come to rely on state subsidies and social handouts.

Dozens of workers who lost their jobs committed suicide and roughly 14 million people — half the population — now live below the poverty threshold, according to official statements.

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| Monday, 12-04-99 | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------|------------|----------------|-----------|------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|--|
| ACCESS 4545868 | | | | | | | | | |
| CURRENCY | JORDAN DINAR | SAUDI RIAL | EGYPTIAN DINAR | OMAN RIAL | QATAR RIAL | KUWAIT DINAR | EGYPT POUND | US DOLLAR | |
| JORDAN DINAR | 1.0000 | 0.1888 | 0.1927 | 1.8777 | 1.6387 | 0.1945 | 2.3264 | 0.1877 | |
| SAUDI RIAL | 5.2973 | 1.0000 | 1.0268 | 9.9470 | 9.7403 | 1.2301 | 1.2073 | 0.7471 | |
| UAE DIRHAM | 5.1893 | 0.9796 | 1.0000 | 9.7441 | 9.5416 | 1.0391 | 1.0242 | 0.7878 | |
| BAHRAIN DINAR | 0.5326 | 0.1005 | 0.1225 | 1.0000 | 0.9792 | 0.1235 | 0.1205 | 0.1205 | |
| OMAN RIAL | 0.5439 | 0.1027 | 0.1048 | 1.0212 | 1.0262 | 0.1258 | 0.1211 | 0.1211 | |
| QATAR RIAL | 5.1427 | 0.9708 | 0.9910 | 9.6585 | 9.4559 | 1.0202 | 1.0132 | 0.7895 | |
| KUWAIT DINAR | 0.4310 | 0.0814 | 0.0930 | 0.8929 | 0.7924 | 0.1038 | 0.1007 | 0.1007 | |
| EGYPT POUND | 4.8136 | 0.8087 | 0.9275 | 9.0386 | 8.8558 | 0.9285 | 0.9037 | 0.9037 | |
| LEBANON LIRA | 21.2147 | 4.0048 | 4.0862 | 39.8358 | 39.7079 | 4.1232 | 4.0778 | 3.9778 | |
| US DOLLAR | 1.4124 | 0.2656 | 0.2722 | 2.6522 | 2.5971 | 0.2748 | 0.2714 | 0.2714 | |
| GBRITAIN STERLING | 0.8738 | 0.1650 | 0.1634 | 1.6408 | 1.5257 | 0.1659 | 0.1636 | 0.1636 | |
| GERMANY MARK | 2.5496 | 0.4813 | 0.4913 | 4.7374 | 4.6883 | 0.4836 | 0.4753 | 0.4753 | |
| SWITZERLAND FRAN | 2.0873 | 0.3540 | 0.4022 | 3.9194 | 3.8379 | 0.4059 | 0.4023 | 0.4023 | |
| FRANCE FRANC | 8.5504 | 1.6141 | 1.6477 | 16.0554 | 15.7219 | 1.6626 | 1.6424 | 1.6424 | |
| JAPAN YEN | 1.6258 | 0.3201 | 0.3268 | 3.1542 | 3.1183 | 0.3237 | 0.3182 | 0.3182 | |
| HOLLAND GULDEN | 2.8726 | 0.5423 | 0.5536 | 5.3940 | 5.2871 | 0.5685 | 0.5520 | 0.5520 | |
| SWEDEN KRONA | 11.6598 | 2.2056 | 2.2546 | 21.9892 | 21.5128 | 2.2757 | 21.4893 | 21.4893 | |
| ITALY LIRA | 25.2401 | 4.7647 | 4.8639 | 47.3942 | 45.4095 | 4.9293 | 5.0375 | 5.0375 | |
| BELGIUM FRANC | 52.5862 | 9.9269 | 10.1336 | 98.7425 | 96.6213 | 10.2255 | 11.2249 | 11.2249 | |
| AUSTRALIA DOLLAR | 2.2205 | 0.4192 | 0.4279 | 4.1654 | 4.2828 | 0.4378 | 5.1623 | 5.1623 | |
| GREEK DRACHMA | 4.2338 | 0.7980 | 0.8157 | 7.9483 | 7.7829 | 0.8231 | 0.8077 | 0.8077 | |
| CYPRIUS POUND | 0.7685 | 0.1432 | 0.1462 | 1.4342 | 1.3946 | 0.1475 | 0.1456 | 0.1456 | |
| AUSTRIA SCHILLING | 17.9363 | 3.3859 | 3.4564 | 33.6796 | 32.9799 | 3.4978 | 41.6194 | 32.7252 | |
| CANADA DOLLAR | 2.1194 | 0.4001 | 0.4084 | 3.9796 | 3.8693 | 0.4121 | 4.0403 | 4.0403 | |
| EURO | 1.3023 | 0.2458 | 0.2510 | 2.4453 | 2.3345 | 0.2522 | 0.2316 | 0.2316 | |

| CURRENCY | US DOLLAR | CURRENT STRIKE | SWISS FRANC | FRANCE FRANC | JPY YEN | HOLLAND GULDEN | ITALY LIRA | EURO |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|--------------|---------|----------------|------------|--------|
| US DOLLAR | 1.0000 | 1.6164 | 0.5540 | 0.6767 | 0.1552 | 0.8229 | 1.4971 | 0.5965 |
| GBRITAIN STERLING | 0.6167 | 1.0000 | 0.3427 | 0.4186 | 0.1222 | 0.5163 | 1.2042 | 0.4513 |
| GERMANY MARK | 1.8051 | 2.9178 | 1.0000 | 1.2215 | 0.2982 | 0.5235 | 1.3975 | 0.5975 |
| SWITZERLAND FRAN | 1.4778 | 2.38 | | | | | | |

Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Tuesday, April 13, 1999 9

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Mineral water bottling companies urge government to reconsider import decision

FIVE MINERAL water bottling companies in the Kingdom have submitted a memorandum to the prime minister requesting the government to reconsider its decision to lift the ban on importing mineral water in order to safeguard the national economy and the local industries. The memorandum said that the ban was lifted on the justification that the consumption during the coming summer will be 100 million litres of mineral water. "This is an exaggerated number although the production capacity of the local mineral water industries is 125 million litres for the summer season," the memorandum said.

The industries referred to the government announcement, when lifting the ban, that a study was conducted on the production capacity of the local mineral water companies and was found to be equal to 56 million litres. "This study was conducted without consulting the companies or really examining their production capacity," the memorandum said. It stressed that during the water crisis last year, the industries did not utilise their full production capacity. "Such statements would raise fears among the public who would resort to storing water and refrain from investing at a difficult economic period when there is no reason to create worries among the consumers," the industries said in their memorandum.

The five companies added that the same policy was called for in the past season under pressure from some parties which sought imports. The water was imported by the Ministry of Supply at the same time to cover the claimed crisis which was found to be "a fabricated one." Verifying such a situation is the fact that the ministry has been unable until now to sell all the mineral water

that was imported, the companies said.

The memorandum criticised the government policy with regard to protecting local industries as it gave examples about protection practices in industrial countries such as the United States, Japan and European states. In addition, the companies complained that allowing imports would lead to unfair competition, that would harm the local industry, especially when interest rates in Jordan are around 16 per cent and energy costs are high.

The companies explained in their memorandum that there are two army-owned water plants in Syria and that both are basically a gift to Syria from a European country. As for Saudi Arabia, "the water plants there have a huge production capacity and they have been set up on attractive financing terms."

The memorandum noted that it is not possible to market Jordanian mineral water to neighbouring markets because of administrative instructions and customs barriers imposed by those states to protect their mineral water industry. "Furthermore, the cost of investment in this type of industry is high due to tight production and health requirements while similar industries in Cyprus, Turkey and Greece do not abide by any conditions," the companies said. "As such, it is worrisome that some mineral water that does not meet health and other conditions might enter the local market."

Industry and Trade Minister Mohammad Asfour said when he opened the door for imports that the ministry gave licences to about 50 local companies to set up mineral water plants but none of them started their projects (Al Ra'i).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) It might seem like your worse fears have come true today, as new secrets are revealed. Don't go into a rage or a dither. You can still be effective if you inspire others to the right path. That's your job, and you're good at it.

Taurus: (April 20 to May 20) Teamwork is the key to your success again, especially if you're feeling pressured. Somebody needs the job done now, and you can't do it all by yourself, nor should you have to. Get others involved, and the final outcome will be better for all.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You're usually the big talker, but today, just the opposite is advised. Instead of saying much, continue to listen, with respect and admiration. You might ask a few leading questions, but not much more than that. Be on a mission to find out the truth, and you'll succeed beyond your wildest expectations.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) You could get a brilliant insight today, possibly through your own studies, possibly through a conversation with teacher or a professor. You've been confronting some tough situations lately, but with faith and inspiration, you'll get through. And it looks like you've got plenty of both.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You and your partner need to talk business. Figure out how much you have and how you're going to allocate it. A conversation about money today can open up new possibilities and keep you from making a silly mistake. So definitely have it.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You and your mate get along so well because each has what the other lacks. So don't waste a lot of time worrying about your differences. You don't need to be alike. That's not what you're in this partnership for. Remember that and it'll be much easier to work together.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) The inspiration today could come from you, in a rather unexpected manner. You're busy doing something you've done a thousand times before, when suddenly you see it with new eyes. You understand it from the other point of view, and that makes all the difference. It could also lead to a promotion.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Looks like somebody you love comes up with a brilliant idea. This could be your mate or true love, but it might also be a young child. Don't ignore obvious brilliance just because it comes from an unlikely source. Heed it and take it to heart.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Looks like there are a few changes underway at your place. This is certainly a good time to make them happen. If you get to feeling something's just not right, trust your hunch. Replace it with something that will work better for you.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) You could have a brilliant insight today. Set yourself up for it by surrounding yourself with interesting material. Practice a skill you're trying to learn. The part you already know you don't know is going to be a cinch. The interesting part, however, is what you don't know. That's why you'll need a coach.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 18) The moon's in Pisces, the sign of inspiration, and you could have a nifty one today. Put that with material you've recently learned and you could make one of those fabulous discoveries that people get famous for. Why not? Somebody's got to do it.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) If you've been working long hours for not enough money, mention it to the higher ups today. You'll do it in a nice way, of course. Like you always do. Don't let any whining seep into your voice today, however. They'll hate that. But if you're fair, they will be, too.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Britain's richest Asians named

LONDON (AFP) — Two brothers whose company is valued at 1.3 billion pounds (\$2.1 billion) were named as Britain's richest Asians.

Srichand Hinduja, 63, and brother Gopi, 59, whose company has interests in finance, oil, industry and telecoms, topped the list of Britain's richest 200 Asians.

The pair beat last year's richest Asian businessman Lakshmi Mittal, 48, whose family steel empire came second with 1.2 billion pounds.

Third was Indian television magnate Subhash Chandra, 48, with 450 million pounds.

Britain's 200 most affluent Asian men and women have a combined wealth of more than seven billion pounds (\$11.3 billion).

Individuals who have made it onto the list, published by the Eastern Eye newspaper, have amassed their wealth in a variety of industries including finance and commodities, fashion, retailing, information technology, hotel and catering and pharmaceuticals.

ABN Amro sees continuing profits from Arab banks

CAIRO (R) — Dutch bank ABN Amro said Monday that banks in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which dominate regional stock exchange turnover, face challenges in 1999.

But it expects generally high profitability to continue, particularly in Egypt and Lebanon.

Jordan too was seen as a viable market in which to invest, with Arab Bank offering "considerable

value," the report said.

Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon are exchanges particularly dominated by trading in banks.

Arab Bank represented more than 40 per cent of Amman's total market capitalisation.

Commercial International Bank (CIB) was one of the most actively traded on the Cairo bourse, and Lebanese banks were pivotal to the economy.

"Significantly, the mar-

kets in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon are all modernising their infrastructure to become more receptive to local, regional and international MENA investor interest," said the report by ABN-Amro's MENA bank analyst Ghassan Medawar.

Despite Egypt's strong macro-economic indicators, ABN Amro has been cautious on its outlook for Egyptian banks.

The sector is dominated by four large state banks which together account for more than 60 per cent of total deposits, 65 per cent of loans and 70 per cent of assets, the report said.

"Without commitment from the government to restructure and privatise the state banks, the MENA investor ought to approach Egypt's banking sector with due caution," the report said.

It added: "Our concern is that the management inefficiencies that currently

plague the public sector banks may begin to leak into the private sector banks as well."

It said private sector banks could become squeezed due to the dominant market positions state banks hold because of their large asset bases and comparatively low cost of funds.

"While we remain cautious on the Egyptian banking sector as a whole, we see long-term value in Commercial International Bank and medium-term earnings stability at National Societe Generale Bank (NSGB)," ABN-Amro said.

It said CIB was developing a range of services from commercial banking to brokerage and insurance, and National Societe was expanding into retail banking.

It said Misr International Bank (Mibank) was likely to generate little earnings growth in 1999, suffering

from the delayed impact of the tax law passed in 1998.

The report gave CIB's return on equity as 23 per cent, in line with Egypt's industry average, and Mibank's as 30 per cent.

It said the return on equity for NSGB was 32 per cent, "given that the bank is under-capitalised and since its earnings are likely to grow faster than CIB and Mibank" during the forecast period 1999-2002.

In Jordan, Arab Bank earned an 18 per cent return on equity. Lebanon's Banque Audi and Banque du Liban et d'Outre Mer earned 20 per cent and 28 per cent respectively.

It said Lebanon's banks would benefit from a well-managed privatisation plan and their leading role in financing post-war reconstruction. ABN-Amro said it favoured Banque Audi and Banque du Liban stock.

Foreigners hold \$29.9b in Israel stocks, bonds

As a result, tradeable bonds accounted for 54 per cent of foreign debt in 1998, compared with 41 per cent in 1994.

Foreigners held \$300,000 in locally issued government debt.

Meanwhile, two Israeli brokers houses, Koor Futures Markets and the Solid Group, said separately that they had been accepted by the Brussels-based Euronext.

"Because of the culture, it will quickly become the natural place for Israeli companies to list," said Goldhar, adding that he expected to bring a company public or do a dual listing within six months.

In 1998 foreigners held 26 per cent — in terms of market valuation — of the Israeli shares traded in Israel and overseas, up from 12 per cent in 1994.

The statement also said that between 1994 and 1998 foreign holdings of government bonds rose by \$2.4 billion.

The Bank of Israel attributed the rise to the government's overseas fund-raising programme, mostly under the framework of U.S. loan guarantees.

"Basically we want the facility to be the only Israeli trading desk that can offer market

making capability worldwide in Israeli shares," said Ofek.

He said the Solid Group would serve as one of the underwriters for two Israeli flotations on the EASDAQ over the next two to three weeks. He declined to name the companies.

Goldhar said he believed EASDAQ would soon rival the Nasdaq as the market of choice for Israeli companies.

"This will allow me to bring Israeli IPOs (initial public offerings) to the EASDAQ and to do double listings," chief executive officer (CEO) of Koor Futures Markets Jacques Goldhar told Reuters. "We will now be able to make markets."

Adam Ofek, CEO of the Solid Group, said his company, which is also a member of Nasdaq, had applied to EASDAQ as part of its strategy to expand the range of services it could provide to Israeli companies.

"Basically we want the facility to be the only Israeli trading desk that can offer market

U.S. 'concerned' about Airbus subsidies

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States has expressed fears that the start of new programmes by the European consortium Airbus Industrie could be used to justify additional government subsidies.

"The Airbus consortium can no longer be considered an infant industry requiring government support," according to an annual report on trade barriers released by the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR).

It noted that Airbus

booked nearly 50 per cent of large civil aircraft orders in 1998 and that its outstanding orders were worth more than \$90 billion.

The United States is concerned that the launch of new Airbus programmes and the restructuring of the Airbus consortium may be used to justify additional government subsidies.

Washington is keeping an eye on plans announced by the member governments — France, Germany, Spain and Britain — to provide financial support.

The European Union (EU) has yet to provide the requested information, according to the USTR.

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Hakkinen gets McLaren back on track in Brazil

SAO PAULO (AFP) — Finland's Mika Hakkinen threw down the gauntlet to the pretenders to his world drivers' crown here on Sunday, winning the Brazilian Grand Prix in the second race of the Formula One calendar.

Hakkinen, driving a McLaren, finished ahead of second-placed Michael Schumacher in a Ferrari with Schumacher's German compatriot Heinz-Harald Frentzen third in a Jordan.

Irishman Eddie Irvine, who came fifth in the other Ferrari, retains the overall lead in the world drivers championship with 12 points after two rounds.

Ralf Schumacher came fourth in a Williams while team Prost's Olivier Panis was sixth.

McLaren's so far less-than-convincing defence of their hard-won drivers' and constructors' championships had looked destined to continue earlier after a disastrous start.

World drivers' champion Hakkinen and teammate David Coulthard had looked well-placed to dominate the race after claiming pole and second place on the grid respectively.

But Coulthard stalled at the start, effectively putting him out of contention before the race had begun while Hakkinen soon gave up his hard-won advantage.

On lap four the Finn conceded the lead to Brazilian driver Rubens Barrichello in a Stewart-Ford with Schumacher taking second place and Hakkinen apparently struggling in third.

Coulthard's problem was later diagnosed to be hydraulic while a gears malfunction was the explanation for Hakkinen's problems on lap four.

"I thought the game was over for me when it happened," said Hakkinen, who retired from the opening race in Australia last month.

"I was coming round the corner and going through the gearbox and everything was looking good. The lead was getting bigger."

"I selected the higher gear but suddenly I didn't have any gears whatsoever. The team told me to continue and suddenly the gears came back."

"In all my career in Formula One I have never had a problem like that. It was incredible really."

"I lost a couple of places and I was very disappointed. But I just thought let's see what happens in the race and when Michael went into the pits I just went flat out."

"I had a lot of traffic which cost me about a second but I managed to get the lead. It was a very hard, demanding race but I am just glad to have won."

Eventually Hakkinen got his act together and started to push Schumacher for second place with nine laps of the 72-lap race gone continued with the German driver in turn closing the gap on Barrichello, whose exploits delighted the vast Brazilian crowd.

Barrichello's British team-mate Johnny Herbert fared less well going out after 17 laps while another Briton, former world champion Damon Hill, also exited early in the race.

Coulthard was three laps back after finally managing to start his car and was making a determined bid to move up the field.

But the Scotsman continued to sail close to the wind, on two occasions driving off the track before managing to find his way back to the tarmac. But finally he gave up the ghost on lap 28.

Frenchman Jean Alesi, in a Sauber, looked to be posting a challenge and at one point was fifth before a dreadful pitstop on lap 26 held him up considerably and his race finished just shortly afterwards.

Barrichello came into the pits on lap 27, handing the lead to Schumacher, and re-emerged in fourth with Hakkinen second and Ferrari's Irvine, who won the opening race of the season in Australia, up to third.

Hakkinen took that cue to turn up the heat on Schumacher with the gap between the two coming down to half a second.

Frenchman Stephane Sarrazin, a Prost test driver making his Grand Prix debut for the Minardi team, was the most spectacular casualty just before the halfway point with a dramatic spin with his car's nosepiece smashed in the resulting collision with a barrier.

Barrichello brought a huge roar from his home crowd when he eased past Irvine to take third place on lap 36.

The man known here as Rubinho has finally brought the crowds back to Interlagos nearly five years after the tragic accident that killed Brazilian golden boy Ayrton Senna at Imola in 1994.

On lap 37 Schumacher came in for his pit stop, ceding the lead to Hakkinen.

Irvine's progress was held up by an uncharacteristically slow 11.6 pit stop by the Ferrari team.

Hakkinen immediately took his stop and came back out still ahead of two-time world champion Schumacher.

Finally Barrichello's glory bid came to an end after 42 laps when he left the circuit with a pall of smoke indicating engine problems.

Just to compound the misery of the Brazilian crowd another local favourite Pedro Diniz, in a Sauber, saw his race come to an end on the same lap.

Giancarlo Fisichella, meanwhile, who had never been out of the points-scoring places had quit in the pit lane four laps earlier.

With 50 laps gone Hakkinen was beginning to put clear blue water between himself and Schumacher, stretching his lead to 5.2 seconds.

The Finn consolidated his lead in the closing laps with Schumacher unable to mount one of his famous charges and, after Irvine's opening victory for Ferrari, the scene looks set for a season-long duel between the teams that dominated last season's championship.

Agassi beats Becker to win 1st Asian title

HONG KONG (AFP) — Andre Agassi won his first tournament in Asia on Monday when he completed a rain-interrupted victory over long-time rival Boris Becker in the final of the Hong Kong Open.

World No. 12 Agassi, who came to Hong Kong on a wild card, needed just 36 minutes to wrap up his 40th career title with a 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-4 victory in the \$350,000 event.

When rain halted play on Sunday, Agassi was a service break up in the decisive third set, and leading 2-0.

Despite a turbulent week — with his two-year marriage to actress Brooke Shields ending — Agassi was outwardly calm as he returned to court and sped to victory over Becker who is heading towards retirement.

"We both played really well today. He still has a game that can beat so many guys on the circuit," said Agassi. "I just wanted to hold serve for I know he can turn a match around quickly."

Agassi, sped to a 5-1 lead in the final set, breaking the German's boom-boom serve in the fifth game.

At 5-2, with Agassi serving for the title, it looked bleak for Becker. But the German who hammered down 11 aces in his four service games, refused to give up. He edged back, breaking Agassi at 0-40 in the eighth game and then held his serve to trail 5-4.



Andre Agassi of the United States celebrates after beating Boris Becker of Germany in the final of the Salem Open ATP tennis tournament in Hong Kong. Agassi won 6-7 (4-7) 6-4 6-4 (Reuters photo)

Championships will be his last tilt at a Grand Slam title. "I hope to be better prepared by the time Wimbledon comes around," added Becker.

The three-time Wimbledon champion saved a third match point but a forehand volley agonisingly wide from Becker gave Agassi the title.

"He beat me today. I didn't lose the match. I gave everything I had," said Becker, who had hoped to register his 50th career title.

"I created chances for myself, but he deserved to win," added Becker, who has said he will retire later this year.

June's Wimbledon

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"I created chances for myself, but he deserved to win," added Becker, who has said he will retire later this year.

June's Wimbledon

Zidane in new injury scare

TURIN (AFP) — Midfield star Zinedine Zidane has given Juventus yet another injury scare before their European Champions League clash with Manchester United next week.

The twisted knee which kept France's World Cup hero out of action for three weeks before the semi final first leg at Old Trafford flared up again here on Sunday, forcing him to retire at half-time against Bologna.

"I didn't come out for the second half because the joint was giving me trouble," said the Frenchman. "I told the coach that I didn't want to go on and he agreed.

"But it's strange all the same," he admitted. "I didn't feel anything for the 90 minutes in Manchester but here all it needed was 45 minutes to cause me problems."

Juventus will have to decide later this week whether to risk their Golden Ball winner, whose contribution against United was priceless, when they face Serie A leaders Lazio on Saturday.

However, Zidane's injury was not the only note of alarm for coach Carlo Ancelotti in Sunday's 2-2 draw.

The performance may seem like good news for United fans, but it is probably a bad omen. With just one point from their last two games, Juventus are now mid-table and all but certain to finish outside the top four.

Prinosil wins rain-delayed match in Tokyo

TOKYO (AFP) — David Prinosil had to wait for a long time due to rain in the morning, but wasted no time to beat Martin Damm on the opening day of the Japan Open tennis tournament on Monday.

The Czech-born German 16th seed stayed on outside court for just less than an hour to score a straightforward 6-1, 6-3 victory over the Czech in the men's singles first round.

"I'm used to it in Tokyo. I was here already five or six times and I know that

sometimes it was raining like two or three days. It's not easy, but it's okay," said Prinosil.

Prinosil stood firm from the outset, breaking Damm's service game in the opening game on a lucky net-corded ball. He fired a total of 10 aces and was never a break point down throughout the match.

"I was playing very aggressive from the beginning. I've won all the four matches we played before and I think he was very nervous. I put pressure on him

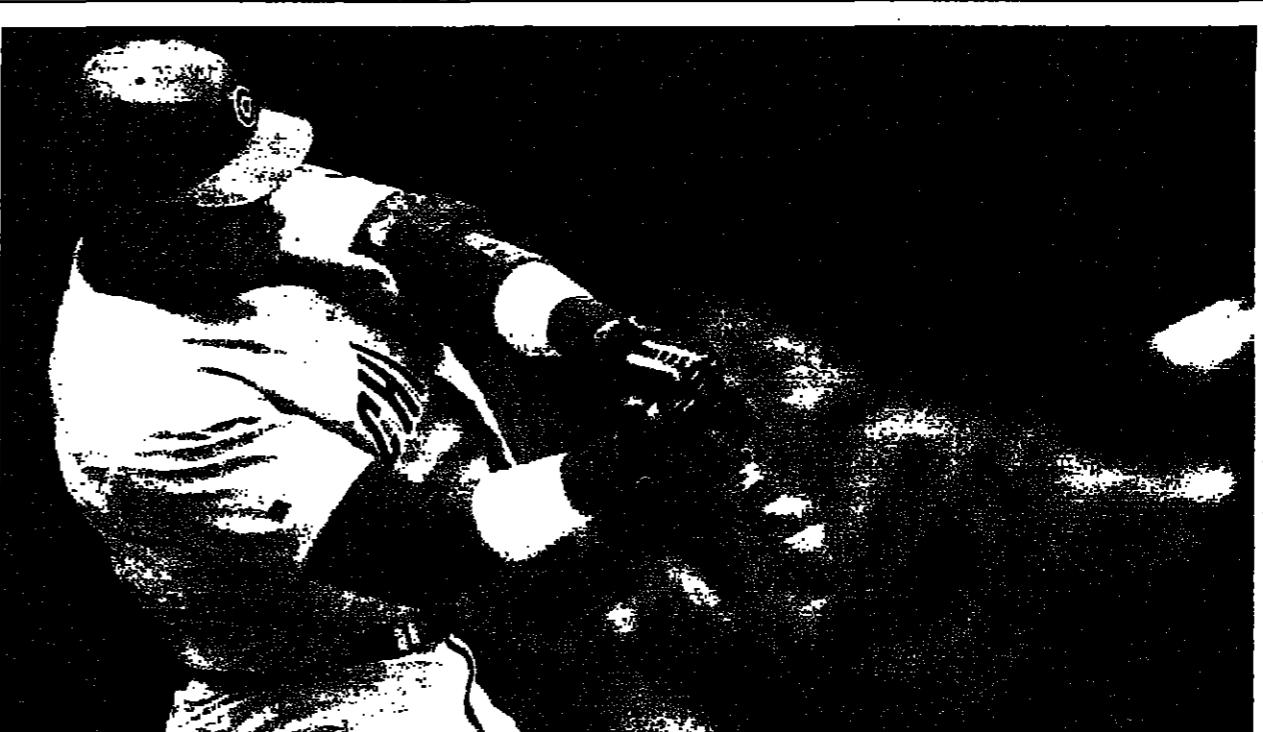
from the beginning. It was the key of the match," said Prinosil.

The \$895,000 hard court event began quietly, but organisers were shocked when triple Wimbledon champion Boris Becker of Germany pulled out due to personal reasons after the Hong Kong Open final on Monday.

Becker plans to hang up his racket in July.

Fellow Germans Oliver Gross and Michael Kohlmann ended the day on a different side with Gross beating Japan's wild card entrant Yasufumi Yamamoto 6-4, 6-4, and Kohlmann losing to Italy's Laurence Tielemans 3-6, 6-7 (6/8).

Tenth seed Daniel Vacek of the Czech Republic was an easy 6-1, 6-1 winner



Sammy Sosa hits his first home run of the 1999 season in the Cubs ninth inning on Sunday against the Pittsburgh Pirates. The Pirates won 9-6 (Reuters photo)

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Seles wins 1st title of 1999

AMELIA ISLAND (AFP) — Monica Seles captured her first title of 1999, and the 44th of her career, here Sunday, cruising past Ruxandra Dragomir 6-2, 6-3 in the final of the \$520,000 Bausch and Lomb Championships.

Seles, the second seed, didn't drop a set all week en route to her first title since she won the Princess Cup in Tokyo last September.

She earned \$80,000 for the victory and will move

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up one spot to third in the WTA Tour rankings next week.

Dragomir, at 26 one year older than Seles, was appearing in her first WTA Tour final since she earned her fourth career title at the Heineken Trophy event in Rosmalen in 1997.

She defeated eighth seed Barbara Schett and Russian teenager Anna Kournikova on the road to the final.



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in Leo Tolstoy's

ANNA KARENINA

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8:30, 10:30

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PLAZA

Leonardo Di Caprio ... in

TITANIC

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BTA' AL WAZIR

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CONCORDE 2

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Shows: 3:30, 5:30

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**Zidane
in new
injury
scare**

Clippers shock Blazers as worst beats best

PORTRALD (R) — The worst team in the NBA beat the best on Sunday as the usually hapless Los Angeles Clippers stunned the Portland Trail Blazers.

The Clippers scored the final 12 points of the game to upset the league-leading Blazers 89-83 a day after losing at home to Portland by 27 points. Maurice Taylor scored 23 points and Sherman Douglas added 19 to lead the Clippers, who scored Portland 29-18 in the fourth quarter.

"In less than 24 hours, we made a great turnaround," said Clippers coach Chris Ford. "It's nice to see this after all of the struggles we've had," added Ford, whose team at 5-31 still has 23 fewer victories than Portland.

Isaiah Rider scored 17 points and Rasheed Wallace added 16 for Portland (28-8), which lost for only the second time in 19 home games this season.

At Utah, the Jazz scored 13 of the first 16 points and never trailed as all five starters scored in double figures in a 85-76 victory over the Houston Rockets. Bryon Russell took some of the burden off Karl Malone by scoring 19 points, Malone added 16 and oft-maligned centre Greg Ostertag held his own against Hakeem Olajuwon with 11 points, a season-high 15 rebounds and five blocks for the Jazz.

"I know the fans have been waiting for this for a long time and we have too as our teammates, so it's really neat to see Greg play well," Malone said. The win moved Utah (27-8) within a half-game of Portland for the best record in the NBA.

Olaoluwa led Houston with 23 points and 12 rebounds. In Boston, the Chicago Bulls scored 32 more points than they did Saturday and still lost. Antoine Walker had 23 points and 11 rebounds and Ron Mercer added 18 points as the Celtics beat the Bulls 87-81 a day after Chicago managed just 49 points in a humiliating loss to Miami.

Dana Barros added 10 points and 12 assists for Boston. Toni Kukoc scored 23 points and Ron Harper chipped in 19 for the Bulls.

At Los Angeles, Gary Payton had 33 points and nine assists as the Seattle Supersonics held off the Lakers 113-109 for their first road win over a team with a winning record.

Vin Baker added 27 points and Hersey Hawkins



Utah Jazz forward Bryon Russell (L) is fouled on the way to the basket by Houston Rocket forward Antoine Carr (R) during the fourth quarter of their NBA game. Carr was a Jazz teammate with Russell last year. The Jazz beat the Rockets 85-76 (Reuters photo)

scored 20 for Seattle, which used a 10-2 run to pull away after the Lakers tied the game at 88-88.

In Miami, Jamal Mashburn scored a season-high 25 points and Alonzo Mourning added 23 as the Heat held off the Milwaukee Bucks 95-92 for their fifth straight victory. Ray Allen scored 25 points to lead the Bucks, losers of four of their last five games.

In Washington, Rod Strickland scored 10 of his 19 points in the fourth quarter, including the go-ahead three-point play with 3:26 remaining, to rally the Wizards to a 105-98 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers.

Mitch Richmond led Washington with 24 points. Allen Iverson had 32 points to lead the 76ers but shot just 1-of-6 in the fourth quarter when Strickland took over for Washington.

In Vancouver, Vlad Divac scored seven of his 13 points in the final five minutes and Chris Webber recorded his 33rd double-double with 24 points and 10 rebounds as the Sacramento Kings held off the Grizzlies 91-88.

Vancouver had a chance to tie in the closing seconds but Pete Chilcutt missed an off-balance 3-pointer from the right wing at the buzzer.

SCOREBOARD

FIFA World Youth Championship

Group D match

Mali 2 - 2 South Korea

Group E

Uruguay 0 - 0 Portugal

Group F

Japan 2 - 1 Cameroon

Group G

Honduras 1 - 1 Spain

Group H

Zambia 1 - 1 Brazil

German League

VfL Bochum 2 - 2 Bayern Munich

B. Leverkusen 2 - 1 Hertha Berlin

Hansa Rostock 2 - 2 Nuremberg

VfL Wolfsburg 2 - 2 Kaiserslautern

Dutch League

Feyenoord 4 - 4 C. Leeuwarden

Scottish Cup semi-final

St Johnstone 0 - 0 Rangers

Rangers play Celtic in the final on May 29

Spanish League

Celta Vigo 5 - 1 Real Madrid

Valencia 1 - 1 Extremadura

Alaves 2 - 1 D. La Coruna

Real Mallorca 1 - 0 Valladolid

Oviedo 0 - 0 Athletic Bilbao

Real Sociedad 1 - 0 Real Betis

Espanyol 2 - 1 Real Zaragoza

Salamanca 1 - 0 Racing Santander

Atletico Madrid 2 - 2 Villarreal

Italian League

Cagliari 1 - 1 Udinese

Florentina 2 - 2 Bari

Juventus 2 - 2 Bologna

AC Milan

Piacenza 2 - 2 Salernitana

Inter Milan 2 - 2 Sampdoria

Vicenza 2 - 2 AS Roma

English Premiership

Everton 2 - 1 Wimbledon

National League

Munich 1860 0 - 0 St Truiden

E. Frankfurt 1 - 1 Schalke

B. Dortmund 0 - 0 Stuttgart

B. Gladbach 0 - 0 Kaiserslautern

Belgian League

FC Utrecht 2 - 2 Ajax

French League

PSG Paris 2 - 2 Olympique Lyonnais

OM Marseille 2 - 2 Toulouse

AS Monaco 2 - 2 Lille

AS Nancy 2 - 2 Metz

RC Lens 2 - 2 Reims

AS Nancy 2 - 2 Metz

Hizbullah bomb kills Israeli soldier in south Lebanon

MARJAYOUN (R) — At least one Israeli soldier was killed on Monday by a roadside bomb inside the Jewish state's south Lebanon occupation zone, a pro-Israeli militia security source said.

The explosion, which damaged an armoured car, occurred on the road to Arnoun Beaufort on the edge of the central sector of the buffer zone, the source said.

Israel has new longer range ballistic missile'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel has developed a longer-range version of its Jericho ballistic missile, believed capable of carrying nuclear warheads, according to a report published on Monday by a Tel Aviv institute.

The Middle East Military Balance, published annually by the Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv university, said the "third generation" of the Jericho ground-to-ground missile has a range of 1,500 kilometres.

The report provides no additional details and cites only "foreign sources" for its information on the Jericho due to Israel's stringent military censorship regulations.

According to international press reports, the Jericho is capable of delivering nuclear warheads developed at the Dimona nuclear centre in southern Israel.

Israel has never acknowledged it possesses nuclear weapons.

The Jaffee Centre report puts the size of Israel's conscription army in 1997 at 187,000 soldiers plus 44,000 men serving reserve duty.

Of the total, 141,000 are ground troops, 36,500 in the air force and 9,500 in the navy, it said.

Israel's air force had 613 combat aircraft in 1997, down from 640 the previous year. In addition Israel obtained 25 F-15 fighter jets from the United States in 1998.

In its ground forces, the army has 3,900 tanks, 55 more than in 1996.

The authors said 2,120 of the tanks were classified as "high quality," including 1,140 Israeli-made Merkava and 420 U.S.-made M-60 and M-60A1s.

This raised to eight the number of Israeli soldiers killed in south Lebanon since the start of the year. Fifteen Israeli troops have been wounded in the same period.

A security source outside the zone said that heavy shelling from the occupation zone showered the area which faces the ancient Crusader castle of Beaufort. In Beirut, the Iranian

backed Hizbullah claimed responsibility for the attack.

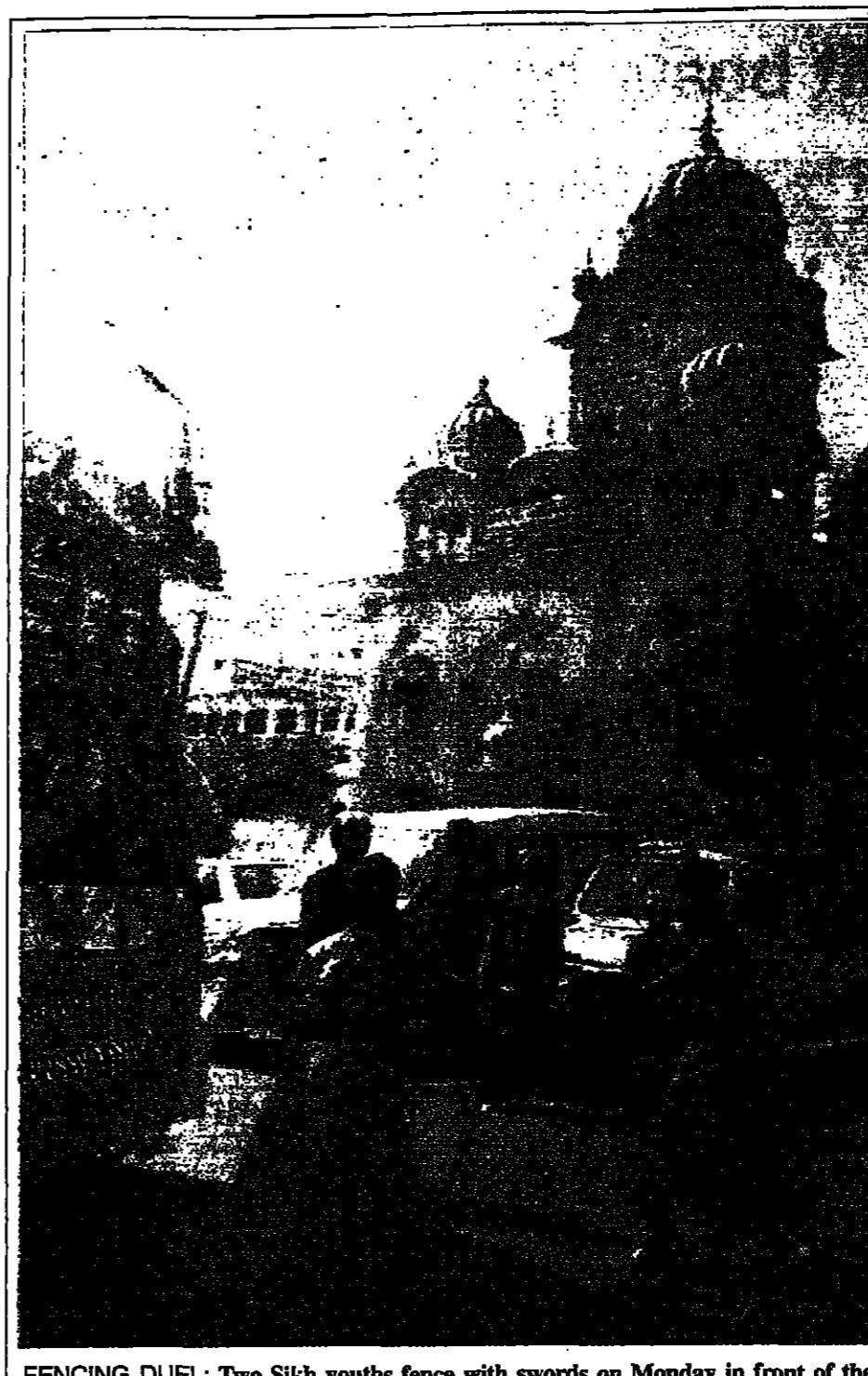
"A roadside bomb planted by our guerrillas went off near an Israeli patrol on the road to Arnoun killing and wounding all of its members," the Hizbullah statement said.

Earlier on Monday after an overnight Israeli raid on south Lebanon, the group said one of its guerrillas was killed "on duty in south

Lebanon." It gave no details.

South Lebanon is the last active Arab-Israeli front where Hizbullah (Party of God) guerrillas are waging a war of attrition to oust 1,000 Israeli troops and about 3,500 of their South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia allies from the zone.

Israel set up the buffer zone in 1985 to guard its borders from potential guerrilla attacks.



FENCING DUEL: Two Sikh youths fence with swords on Monday in front of the Golden Temple in Amritsar during celebrations marking the 300th anniversary of the birth of the Khalsa form of the Sikh religion. Hundreds of thousands of Sikhs from around the world are participating in the week-long celebrations (AP photo)

Egypt, Japan urge Arafat to delay Palestinian state

TOKYO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said Monday Palestinian President Yasser Arafat should postpone plans to declare an independent state on May 4, a Japanese official said.

The visiting Egyptian leader made the statement during a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, said the Japanese foreign ministry official.

President Mubarak said Mr. Arafat should also understand well that he should not declare independence on the fourth of May, "an interim period of autonomy under the 1993 Oslo accords expires," the official said.

Arafat has repeatedly said he will declare a state on that date.

But he has come under pressure from the international community, including the United States, Russia and Japan, to express their deep concern

postpone a declaration at least until after Israeli elections on May 17.

"We must proceed with the peace process no matter what kind of government is to be formed following national elections in Israel," an official quoted Obuchi as telling Mubarak.

During a luncheon meeting, Mubarak was quoted as saying: "Honestly speaking, I am also uncertain how Israeli elections may turn out. But we must continue to proceed with the peace process no matter who leads the country."

The Japanese premier urged Arafat when he visited Tokyo last week to postpone his plan to declare an independent Palestinian state to avoid endangering the peace process.

In a joint statement issued after Monday's meeting, Mubarak and Obuchi "expressed their deep concern

Sharon urges Russia to block weapons technology leaks to Iran

'Assad ired by Sharon's visit'

DUBAI (AFP) — The presence of the Israeli foreign minister in Moscow led Syrian President Hafez Assad to cancel his first visit to post-Soviet Russia at the last minute, newspapers reported Monday.

"Russia's snap decision to receive Israeli Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon irritated Syria," the Arabic-language Al Hayat said, quoting informed sources. "President Assad's visit was delayed at the request of Damascus and the decision was reached late Saturday evening," it said.

The London-based daily noted that Sharon arrived in Moscow on Sunday for a three-day visit, also met with Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov on Monday for talks on economic ties and Mideast peace process.

The visit to Moscow is Sharon's second in a month. He accompanied Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on a trip to Ukraine, Russia and Georgia in mid-March.

Netanyahu is carefully cultivating relations with Russia at a time when tensions between Russia and the United States, Israel's traditional ally, have deepened over the NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia.

Sharon himself has come

under fire in Israel for his lukewarm support for the NATO air strikes. Russia is vehemently opposed to the bombings.

Ivanov rejected the suggestion Monday, saying that development of Russian-Israeli relations was "in the interest of all political parties that are competing in [Israeli] elections."

Iraq rejects new U.N. arms initiatives

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq rejected on Monday any new U.N. terms to monitor disarmament and defiantly stood by demands for a quick end to sanctions amid almost daily punishment from U.S. and British warplanes.

"It is Iraq's right to demand a lifting of the oil embargo without conditions, and it will accept nothing else," the ruling Baath Party's Al Thawra newspaper said in an editorial.

"This is the basis for a good relationship between Iraq and the U.N. Security Council and without it this body must not expect Iraqi cooperation," the daily said.

The U.N. Security Council was to continue discussions on Iraqi disarmament later this week, but is deeply divided over the way forward.

However only Russia has voiced protests over the aerial war of attrition waged with virtual impunity by Britain and the United States. Moscow complained of "illegal actions" when U.S. fighters bombed Iraqi oil installations on April 6.

"Iraq no longer has weapons of mass destruction and has accomplished all that was asked of it" by the United

destruction, diplomats said.

The other 12 members supported lifting the oil embargo as an incentive to Iraq to cooperate with a future arms-monitoring system recommended by the disarmament panel.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi military reported two people were killed and nine wounded in U.S.-British attacks in southern Iraq on Sunday. They were the first reported deaths from the raids since March 2 when one person died.

The U.S. Southern Command said U.S. F-18 fighters fired on two surface-to-air missile sites after coalition airplanes came under anti-aircraft fire.

The strike came a day after the Pentagon said U.S. F-16 fighter planes were fired upon with surface-to-air missiles, and retaliated with missiles of their own.

The no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq have been the scene of skirmishes between allied aircraft and Iraqi planes and air defences since the December campaign, dubbed Operation Desert Fox, to punish Baghdad's refusal to cooperate with U.N. disarmament experts.

Britain, the Netherlands and the United States repeated their opposition Friday to a lifting of sanctions because Iraq had not been fully disarmed of its weapons of mass

Algeria campaign heats up before April 15 election

ALGIERS (R) — Algeria's seven presidential candidates stepped up the search for votes on Monday, the last day of a grueling three-week campaign before the April 15 poll to choose a successor to President Lamine Zeroual.

Algeria's 500,000-strong army, police and customs agents began voting on Monday, while 643 mobile units travelled to gather votes in remote areas of the North African country, which has been torn by violence for years.

More than 70,000 people have been killed, according to Western estimates, since 1992 when Algeria's military authority at the time scrapped a general election which radical Islamists were poised to win.

"Government officials in all sectors... have contributed with effectiveness and impartiality in providing the appropriate conditions for a fair, honest and transparent election throughout the process," he said in a cabinet meeting. "Now all the conditions exist for a democratic election."

Three of them — former Prime Minister Mouloud Hamrouche and Islamists Ahmad Taleb Ichchikhi and Abdullah Djebelian — will

meet later on Monday along with a representative of ailing secular opposition leader Hocine Aït Ahmed, to discuss the possibility of selecting just one of them to challenge Bouteflika.

"We will discuss this issue tonight after evaluating the electoral process and the results of the campaign," Hamrouche told a news conference. "All options are open."

Ousmane President Zeroual has ordered the powerful army to stay neutral and on Sunday urged Algeria's 17.5 million voters to go to the ballot to practice freely their constitutional right.

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Algeria's four main political parties have declared support for Bouteflika, 61, saying he was the man best able to lead the oil and gas-producing nation out of its cycle of violence.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Chinese teacher bites off pupil's ear

BEIJING (AFP) — A Beijing teacher bit off a pupil's ear during a schoolyard dispute, the Life Times newspaper said Monday. The two came to blows on Tuesday in No. 163 school in the Chinese capital during "a small quarrel" which other pupils tried to halt, the paper said. As the pupil, called Zhang and aged about 15, tried to return to the classroom the teacher Wei attacked him and bit off his ear. The mangled ear was found on the ground and doctors at a nearby hospital managed to sew it back on. The teacher has been detained.

Arafat seeks Zimbabwe's support

HARARE (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Monday sought Zimbabwe's support for his plans to declare an independent Palestinian state, state media said. Arafat, who arrived here Sunday night, held talks with President Robert Mugabe on Monday who advised him to postpone a declaration of Palestinian statehood, saying such a move would be counterproductive, the state radio and news agency said. Mugabe noted that most countries share the view that a declaration of statehood should be delayed until the situation in the region improved and he expressed hope that the Palestinians consider that position seriously.

Barak refuses to join campaign debate

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Ehud Barak, leader of Israel's main opposition Labour Party, refused on Monday to participate in a television debate with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Centre Party chief Yitzhak Mordechai. The private television network Channel Two invited the three candidates for prime minister in the May elections to debate Tuesday on a prime time political talk show. The network said Netanyahu and Mordechai had tentatively agreed to participate, but Barak, who is leading in opinion polls, rejected the format proposed for the showdown. "The issue of campaign debates must be decided by the parties themselves and not by television managers or the media," Barak said in a statement issued by his campaign headquarters.

Khatami lambasts peace process

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami hit out Monday on the Middle East peace process, and said Iran would "never recognise" the state of Israel. "The Middle East compromise process" is "void from a legal, political and ideological point of view, and will never be effective," Khatami told leading Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official Farouk Kaddoumi, quoted by the official IRNA news agency. The Islamic Republic of Iran "will never recognise the Zionist regime of Israel, believing that usurpation, aggression and assassination do not deserve any right for anybody," he said. "Palestine's destiny cannot be determined without the votes of all Palestinians, including Muslims, Jews and Christians," he said.

Libya invited to Euro-Med meeting

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union (EU) said on Monday it has invited Libya to attend a meeting later this week of foreign ministers from the 15-nation bloc and partner countries in the Mediterranean. "Libya will have observer status, it will be a special guest," at the Euro-Mediterranean talks, EU spokesman Bosco Esteruelas said. The meeting is due to be held on Thursday in Stuttgart, Germany. The EU said last week that Libya's extradition of the two suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am flight over Scotland could lead to Tripoli's inclusion in free trade talks with the 15-nation bloc.

Saudi murderer beheaded

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi who fatally shot a woman was beheaded by the sword on Sunday, bringing to nine the number of executions so far this year, the interior ministry announced Monday. A ministry statement, reported by the press, gave no motive for the murder of Nafat Bint Ali Al Qahtani, who was gunned down by Hassan Ben Maras Al Qahtani. They were from the same tribe. In 1998, 29 people were executed.

No miracle, watchdog rules

LONDON (R) — Britain's advertising watchdog ruled on Monday that a miracle cure could not be proved and should not be used to advertise a church. The advertisement for a British church saying a man crippled by a painful nerve disease had been cured by the power of Jesus lacked substantial proof and must be withdrawn, the watchdog said. But the Pentecostal church in Brentwood, southeastern England, insisted the advertisement told the true story of one man's recovery from chronic sciatica, which had left him bed-ridden and dependent on strong painkillers. The Advertising Standards Authority was not impressed. It criticised the advertisement in its monthly report on Monday, saying there was not enough proof that spiritual healing was responsible for man's amazing recovery.

Forklift driver has donated \$1 million to charity

DEARBORN (AP) — Forklift driver Matel "Mat" Dawson has achieved a status normally reserved for high-profile business or civic figures — he's a philanthropist who has donated \$1 million to charity. Dawson's latest gift, a \$200,000 scholarship grant to Wayne State University, put the 78-year-old past the million-dollar mark in lifetime donations. "I just do this because I want to give back," Dawson told the Detroit News for a story Sunday. "I want to leave a legacy." With 59 years at Ford Motor Co., Dawson could have retired decades ago.

Passengers shout officials off jet

HONG KONG (AP) — Passengers on a delayed Air China flight from Shanghai to Beijing revolted after learning they were being kept on the ground to wait for some government officials who were running late, and they eventually shouted the officials off the jet, a newspaper reported Monday. Flight CA 986 had originated in San Francisco and was due to leave Shanghai at 1230 GMT on Friday but ended up on the ground for 350 hours as the officials failed to show up. When the passengers learned why they were stalled, they demanded that the captain take off but were told that air traffic control wouldn't give clearance until the officials were aboard. The government officials finally arrived, only to be greeted by shouts of "rotten eggs" and "get off the plane."

'Home' Christening for Argentine baby

BUENOS AIRES (R) — An Argentine baby was christened in a soccer field during a break in a junior league match, fulfilling a promise made by his parents to have their first son baptised at "home," the state-run Telam Agency said. A priest blessed the 10-month-old baby on Saturday in the central circle of the Gimnasia La Plata field, where home team Gimnasia was hosting traditional rival Estudiantes La Plata. The baby's father signed him up as a Gimnasia supporter only hours after his birth, the agency said.

Women in naked charity pursuit

LONDON (AP) — Eleven English women have joined the traditionally sedate image of a genteel women's group by posing nude for an unusual pin-up calendar. The members of the Women's Institute (WI) in the village of Ryhope, northeast England, more used to collecting clothes than shedding them, stripped off to raise money for research into leukaemia. Aged between 44 and 65, they appear one per month on the calendar and all together for December, singing Christmas carols sporting little more than songbooks and red hats. It is a radical departure from the former Women's Institute fundraising stalwarts of jam-making and quilt-making.

جذب الحيل